No. 19 PRICE 5 CENTS

MY QUEEN

MARION MARLOWE IN ST. LOUIS
OR A FORGER'S BOLD DEED
BY GRACE SHIRLEY

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Here Is Health

53 Leading St., Cleveland, O.,
Oct. 7, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—I am pleased to inform you that your Remedies have completely cured me. I was troubled with weak lungs and chest, and also had catarrh. I *know* the Slocum System is the best in the world, and I will recommend your medicine to all who may be in need of Remedies of their character.

Yours truly,
HARRY L. LYON.

McComb, Pike Co., Miss.,
Oct. 2, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—I write to let you know that your Remedies have entirely cured my little girl of scrofula and I feel very thankful to you for all your kindness.

Yours respectfully,
MALISIA ADISON.

Wesson, Copiah Co., Miss.,
Oct. 4, 1900.

DR. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—In reply to your kind letter I wish to say that since taking your Remedies I am sound as a dollar. I believe had it not been for your medicine I would now be in my grave. I feel very thankful to you for the cure that was performed in my case, and beg to remain,

Yours sincerely,
CHAS. VAN NORDEN.

Woodland, St. Joseph Co.,
Oct. 9, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—My little boy had catarrh in the head very badly. When he was five years old I saw your medicine advertised and tried it and he now is entirely cured. I can highly recommend your medicine to anyone.

Yours respectfully,
MRS. ASA TABER.

Grove Park, Alachua Co., Fla.,
Oct. 19, 1900.

Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—I received your letter, also the Remedies that you sent at my request and hope you will pardon my long delay in writing to you to recommend your good medicine. The pain in my breast has vanished and I am feeling a great deal stronger than before. I shall recommend your Remedies to all in my town who are suffering from consumption or any disorder of the throat, chest and lungs. Thinking you very kindly for what you have done for me, I remain,

Yours respectfully,
M. F. BOOKER.

Oran, Onondaga Co., N. Y.,
Sept. 5, 1900.

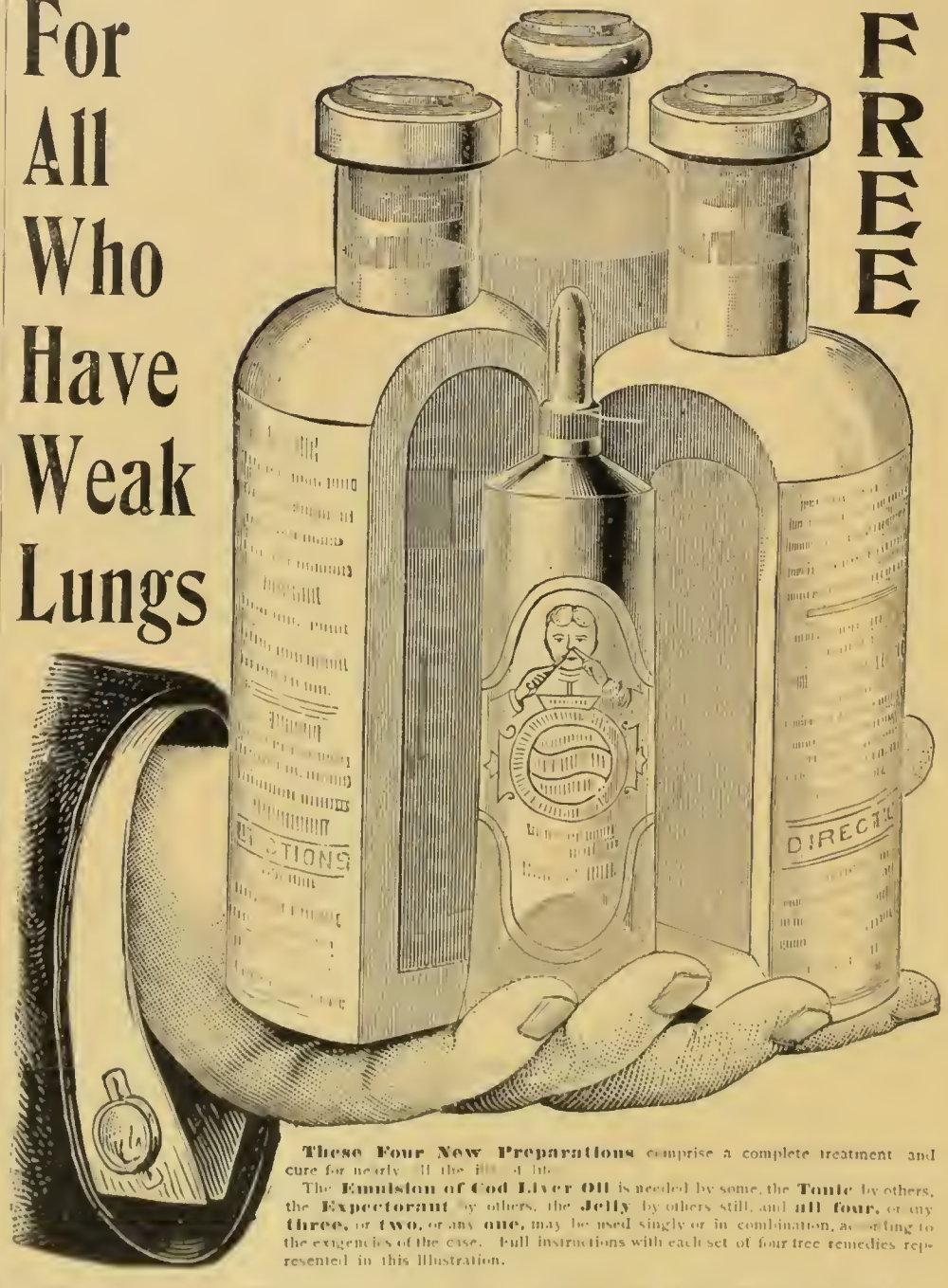
Dr. T. A. SLOCUM,

Dear Sir:—The cough which has troubled me so long is now entirely gone, and I owe my restoration to your wonderful Remedies. I am getting stronger every day, for which I feel very thankful to you, and shall recommend your Remedies to everybody.

Your respectfully,
CHAS. H. DARLING.

For All Who Have Weak Lungs

FREE



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MY QUEEN
A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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Marion Marlowe in St. Louis;

OR,

A FORGER'S BOLD DEED.

By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

A PLOT.

"Well, if this isn't exasperating! We are in a nice box, Mab! I am so disgusted that I have a good mind to throw up the whole thing, shake the smoke of this blooming old city from my auburn wig and make tracks for New York to-morrow morning. Oh, dear! I'm hoodooed! Jonahed! There's no use denying it. I wonder if there is a fortune-teller to be found anywhere in the limits of beautiful St. Louis!"

The speaker, a fairly good-looking girl of eighteen, drew a long breath as she finished, and then stood staring at her companion, waiting for an answer.

Her name was Lou Leland, and her profession that of an actress. Both she and her friend, Mabel Maitland, had just been engaged by the Temple Theatrical Company to play minor *rôles* in their productions during the week in St. Louis.

Mabel was just diving into the depths of a big theatrical trunk, but she straightened up suddenly when her companion finished her exclamation.

"What's broke now, Lou?" she asked, indifferently. "Isn't the manager good-looking enough to suit your fastidious taste, or has he discovered what a dizzy fake you are? Out with it, ducky, and perhaps you'll feel better!"

"Oh, I'll tell fast enough! I couldn't keep it to myself if I tried," said Lou, as she began making grimaces at herself in the mirror of the dressing-case.

"Now, what do you suppose made me join this company, anyway, Mab? Nothing in the wide, wide world but because the manager was good-looking, the leading-man handsome and the comedian a perfect darling! Would you believe it, when I saw Dr. Reginald Brookes my head began to whirl; but when these lustrous orbs rested upon the chiseled features of that kid, Bert Jackson, I simply lost my mental equilibrium altogether! Went daft, you might say; and my brains positive-

ly did two-steps. If you don't believe it, just listen to this—I deliberately signed a contract with the Temple Company to play boys' parts for only twenty dollars per, and expenses! Just think of it, Mab! Me playing for a paltry twenty! Me, the greatest thing that ever happened in auburn wigs and short trousers! Oh, I must have been rattled—actually chattering—when I did it!"

There was another long sigh as she leaned forward and twisted a bit of blue ribbon to her flame-colored ringlets.

"Biggest salary you ever had, isn't it?" asked her friend, dryly.

"Mabel Maitland, how dare you? Why, you are positively insulting! As if I didn't sign a contract once for thirty per and expenses, and——"

"And the company went to pieces before you started! The sight of the payroll drove the manager to drink, and the 'angel' of the company went to the lunatic asylum, if I remember correctly," broke in Miss Maitland.

"Mabel, you're the limit!" cried her companion, laughing. "I'd cut your acquaintance this minute if I could, but I can't, thanks to our manager—he of the winning ways! He's got us boxed in together from the very start, and I can't stop speaking to you; it would break my heart! I've got to talk or die, so I'm obliged to stand it."

"I guess it's as easy for you as it is for me," laughed Mabel. "You ain't the sweetest creature in the world when a body is caged in a dressing-room with you; but there's one consolation—I've seen worse in my travels; so come on, finish your prinking, and let's get some breakfast."

"Always thinking of grub," sighed Lou, impatiently. "Why, Mabel Maitland, I have feasted already. I am full to overflowing of those magnificent eyes—not Mr. Temple's, nor Bert Jackson's, but those of our leading man, the doctor! How can I look upon sordid food after such a diet? And, oh, how I have drunk in the music of that boy's laugh—not the doctor's, Mab, but the comedian's, Bert Jackson's! Truly, my soul seems gorged with what it has devoured! I am like one drunken upon the beauty of mankind! Talk not to me of fleshly viands when I crave only the sustenance of a magnetic presence!"

The ecstatic rhapsody was brought to an untimely end, and Lou was obliged to dodge a pair of curling-irons and a few other miscellaneous articles which her companion hurled at her head in earnest protestation.

"Let up! For goodness sake, let up, Lou!" she entreated. "Do you want the people in this hotel to think you've gone crazy? Here, come and hold this towel, so I can filter the water. I'm not stuck on mud baths, although I believe they are considered healthy."

"It's a great town," remarked Lou, descending suddenly from her flight of oratory. "They tell me that they've got some of the handsomest men in creation in St. Louis, only the smoke is so thick you never can find them! Just think how exciting it must be on a clear day, Mab! The girls can catch one fleeting glimpse of the manly beauty of the town; when, presto! they are lost in oblivion again and a game of blind man's buff is promptly in order. Oh, it would never do for me to live in this town! I'd die if I had to be forever searching and washing the smudge from manly faces for purposes of identification!"

"Pshaw! It isn't half so bad as that," said Mabel, as she deluged her face. "There are parts of St. Louis where the atmosphere is all right, and the residential portion is positively beautiful! As for the men, well, I've heard that most of them went the pace for fair—rapid transit isn't in it with the St. Louis boys—and they're as big-hearted as they are speedy. I hope we'll meet a few dozen of them."

"Well, I'm satisfied with those we have in the company," said Lou, promptly. "If I only had half a chance to captivate the doctor;—but, pshaw! Miss Marlowe has got him bound hand and foot in the fetters of love. He just worships our star; have you noticed it, Mabel?"

"Sure! It's as clear as daylight," said Mabel, promptly.

"It's lots clearer than St. Louis daylight," retorted Lou, glancing out of the window. "Now, I wonder if there is any way to cut her out? I'd try it in a minute if I thought I could do it."

"There's no harm in trying," said Mabel, who was growing interested now. "All is

fair in love and war,' you know, Lou, and so long as they are not married, the field is open."

"I'll try it," said Lou, suddenly, as she turned back from the window. "I'm an adept at cutting other girls out, as you know, Mab; I guess I can do it again if I go about it properly."

"Well, as I'm a bit interested, I'll help you," said Mabel, dryly. "I'd give my boots to get a smile from Bert Jackson!"

"Then here goes for a conspiracy," said Lou, very softly. "We'll enter into a compact to break up a few of the existing affections in the company, and bring about a new order of love-making, eh, Mabbie?"

"How'll we start in?" asked Mabel, with a thoughtful frown. "Remember, there's Miss Allyn, the star's chum, and Miss Ellis, the *ingénue*, to be considered. They worship Marion Marlowe, and they'll fight for her, you bet. We've got to act cautiously or we'll be ignominiously defeated."

"Pshaw! I'm a match for any of them, and so are you, Mab! Why, an old trick carefully manipulated will do the work. All we've got to do is to make the doctor and Bert think that Miss Marlowe has a lover on the quiet that she's dead stuck on, and they'll soon lose interest—that's a man's nature."

"And then they'll turn to us for consolation, if we are agreeable," laughed Mabel.

"And we'll be that, all right; just watch us!" smiled back Lou. "Oh, we are a hard pair to draw to, you and I, Mab McPherson—oh, I beg your pardon! Miss Mabel Maitland!"

"Where's a pencil and paper, Lou?" asked Mabel, anxiously; "never mind about calling names. Let's get down to business."

"Oh, but it mustn't be in our handwriting," cried Lou, who understood perfectly what she meant; "that's beautifully stupid—the act of a greeny."

"What's the matter with blocking it out and getting it copied on a typewriter; that is what they were invented for."

"That isn't a bad idea; still, a lover wouldn't write to Miss Marlowe on a typewriter, Mab. Why, his words would be burning with love, you know. He'd never be able to click them out in cold lead. No, it must be written in long-hand, and by a man; that is positive!"

"And I know the very man to do it!" cried Lou, quickly. "He'd do anything I told him if he hung for it the next minute. I'll telephone him at once! He's right in the city."

"How wonderfully lucky," drawled Mabel, dryly. "It is convenient to have a mash in every town; now, isn't it? Let's see, we got here last night at eleven o'clock. Well, that is pretty quick work, even for a soubrette, Lou."

"Pshaw! Wasn't I out shopping this morning?" asked Lou, laughing. "But I'm not going to explain any more about that; I'm going straight down-stairs to telephone to the booby!"

"Keep your eye peeled, Lou! Don't let any one see or hear you," warned Mabel.

"See here! Who are you talking to, Mab?" asked Lou, sharply. "Why, I've got a record for this sort of thing! I've broken up more matches than you can shake a stick at! I haven't been on the stage ten years for nothing! Why, this game that we are up against is a perfect kindergarten. We can give 'em cards and spades and then beat them hands down——"

"Hush! Be careful, Lou! There's some one coming!"

Mabel put her finger to her lips in a cautious manner just as some one touched the knob of their door and rattled it violently.

CHAPTER II.

THE INGENUE'S NEWS.

"Let me in a minute, girls!"

It was Miss Ellis, the *ingénue* of the company, who spoke.

Mabel Maitland crossed the room and opened the door promptly.

"Hello, Ellis! We were just talking about you!" she said, with great cordiality. "Lou and I were just envying you your handsome sweetheart; of course, you know who we mean—Mr. Albert Jackson!"

Miss Ellis was not a girl of over-quick perceptions, but she had seen sufficient of life behind the scenes to learn to be cautious; besides, she had no notion of letting these girls know anything about Bert, or any of

her old friends in the company, for that matter.

"Then your envy has gone astray," she said, very promptly. "Bert cares about as much for me as he does for his grandmother! Why, he's been in love with Miss Marlowe ever since he was a baby!"

The words were so frank that the two plotters stared for a minute. They had only seen the company at one rehearsal, but they had both paired Bert off with Miss Ellis immediately.

"But he looked all sorts of things at you yesterday at rehearsal," said Lou; "yet I guess you'd admit it quick enough if he was really in love with you."

"Oh, I don't know."

Miss Ellis drawled the words laughingly.

"I might be afraid to tell it, you know! Some of you prettier girls would be stealing him from me."

"He's rich, ain't he?" asked Mabel, trying to speak indifferently.

Miss Ellis glanced at her sharply, and there was a twinkle in her eyes.

"Rich? Bert Jackson! Why, he was brought up in the poorhouse!" she cried, with perfect honesty.

"Good heavens! Who would have thought it!" exclaimed Lou, in astonishment. "Why, he has the air of a lord, and I was sure he had money! Why, he flashed a wad as big as my wrist in the train last evening!"

"Stage money!" said Miss Ellis, with a toss of her head. "He's a friend of the property man, and I suppose he carries it as a bluff! Don't let him fool you, girls! Just ask him to let you see it!"

There was a merry smile upon her face, but neither of her companions noticed it. They were too disconcerted by her startling information.

"Well, Dr. Brookes is rich, certainly," said Lou, after a minute; "I got that straight from Hinton, the calcium man. He told me that the doctor was only acting for fun, and that he would go back to his practice in New York as soon as this tour was ended."

"Oh, yes; the doctor is rich; there's no denying that," said Miss Ellis, frankly. "He don't have to carry stage money around in his pocket; and,—oh, you ought to see another of Miss Marlowe's lovers, girls! His nam' is Archie Ray, and he's a howling swell! Belongs to the aristocracy, the same as Dr. Brookes, and he's completely daft over her. I never saw anything like it."

The girls glanced at each other, and Lou winked significantly; then she smiled sweetly at the *ingénue* as she closed the door and locked it.

"Tell us all about it. I just dote on love affairs," she said, with another wink at her room-mate. "Has she refused him out and out, or is she just playing with him?"

Miss Ellis was never so happy as when she was talking about Marion Marlowe; but she was still endeavoring to be guarded with her information. Every one in the company knew about Archie Ray, so she did not hesitate to talk on that subject.

"Oh, I think she must be considering it," she said, cautiously. "Miss Marlowe doesn't fall in love with every man she meets. If she did, she'd be up to her ears in the hottest kind of water. But they are all in love with her, every mother's son of them! But, who in the world could blame them! She is the loveliest girl in creation!"

Mabel tossed her head a little disdainfully.

"Oh, she's pretty, all right, and I guess she's amiable; but there are others, Ellis, even if I do say it! Wait till I get into my stage clothes, and then take a look at me. I've got a neck that beats Langtry's, and——"

"Miss Marlowe don't travel on her shape!" snapped Miss Ellis, scornfully. "She is beautiful and talented, and a genuine artist! It wouldn't make any difference if she was as ugly as sin, her voice and manner would charm the audience. And don't you think for a minute that Archie Ray don't worship her! Why, he's her humble slave, in spite of his high position in society! He's the only fellow in the world that can make the doctor jealous!"

Another wink followed this bit of information; then Lou looked out of the window indifferently as she asked a question.

"This Mr. Ray don't happen to be in this part of the country, does he, Miss Ellis? If he is, it must be mighty uncomfortable for the doctor."

"He's in Chicago at present. Marion told

me so only last night. They correspond regularly, but the doctor knows it. I suppose he thinks it doesn't matter, so long as she is not engaged to him."

"There, I can actually see across the street," called Lou, suddenly; "and as I've got to get a pair of gloves, I guess I must leave you. There are some stores located somewhere in those clouds, I fancy."

"Oh, yes; and good ones, too!" said Miss Ellis, quickly. "Shall I go with you, Miss Leland? I know the way, and I'll be glad to be of use, if you happen to want me."

"Oh, Lou will find the way all right," spoke up Mabel, quickly; "and if you please, Ellis, I'd like you to help me. I'm not sure I know my part, and I want some one to rehearse me."

"Why, certainly I'll stay," said Miss Ellis, promptly; "and you must be at the theatre at eleven, Miss Leland, so you had better go. It's only four blocks to Barr's."

Lou gave another look at her chum and hurried away.

She would not be obliged now to write an anonymous letter.

"So you like Bert Jackson, do you?" asked Miss Ellis, as soon as she was gone. "Well, here's a secret for you, Miss Maitland: There's no use in losing your heart to Bert, but there is one man in the company who is very susceptible. Don't tell a soul that I told you; but it is Mr. Temple, the manager."

"I surmised that," was the answer, as Mabel went for her manuscript. "He looked unutterable things the day he engaged me; and say, didn't he blush when I flattered him a little!"

It was the *ingénue's* turn to start a little now. She could hardly imagine Mr. Temple blushing.

"You must have charmed him, Miss Maitland," she said, very gravely. "Why, I never dreamed of his being so susceptible as that, and yet I always knew he was a great admirer of women."

Miss Maitland had found her part now, so the rehearsing began and there was nothing more said about the members of the company.

When Miss Ellis left the room she still wore a puzzled look. She could not quite get over the thought of Mr. Temple's blushing.

"Some girls are such fools," she whispered to herself. "Why, if I should tell that to the others they'd never stop laughing! Your days are numbered in this company, my dear, if you have been flirting with Mr. Temple."

"Oh, Miss Ellis!"

It was Alma Allyn who called. Miss Ellis stopped at a half-closed door and promptly pushed it open.

"I've been in rehearsing the new soubrette," she said, a little guardedly. "She's all right in the part; she's dead letter-perfect."

"That is good; better than I fancied, even," was the pleasant reply as Miss Allyn drew a letter from her pocket. "I wasn't particularly impressed with those two additions to the company when I saw them yesterday. The little blonde looks treacherous, and the big one looks surly; but, of course, I may be mistaken. I hope I am, but come in and shut the door; I want to read you something. I have just received a note from Mr. Temple."

Miss Ellis did as she was told, and Miss Allyn opened her letter.

" 'Dear Miss Allyn,' " she read, in her jolly voice, " 'please do me the favor to see that all of the ladies remain on the stage after the final curtain to-night, as a little scene that is not down on the bill will then be enacted.' That is all he says," she went on, as she closed the letter, "and Marion and I have nearly worn out our wits trying to fathom the secret in his very brief letter."

"I do hope it is something pleasant," said Miss Ellis, quickly. "We've had so many tragedies to enact that were not down on the bills that, just for a change, I hope this will be a comedy."

"So do I, indeed," said Miss Allyn, emphatically; "but it is too much for me! I have given up guessing!"

"I expect the Mayor of St. Louis, or the Governor of Missouri has fallen in love with Miss Marlowe, and they are going to give a reception in her honor or something like that," began Miss Ellis, when a laughing voice stopped her.

"Or perhaps it is the President of the

United States coming out to St. Louis to pay his respects to the twinkling star of the Temple Theatrical Company! Honestly, Miss Ellis, I wonder sometimes that you do not make me vain! I wish I deserved half of your admiration!"

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLE IN PROSPECT.

Marion Marlowe herself was standing in the doorway, her great gray eyes bent laughingly upon her two companions.

"No one could love you too much," answered Miss Ellis, promptly. "Oh, I just wish I was a man! How I would make love to you!"

"And get beautifully sat upon for your pains," laughed Alma Allyn, slyly. "Why, I would really like to see the man that Marion would let make love to her. There's been plenty of them to try it, but with what success? Marion is as heart-whole and fancy-free to-day as she was before she saw them!"

"I don't believe that any girl knows who she loves before she is eighteen," said Marion, as she crossed the room; "and just think how awful it would be to marry the wrong man! Any number of girls have done it, and, oh, how I pity them!"

"It must be dreadful!" murmured Alma Allyn, in a thoughtful voice. "Why, I would not dream of marrying if I were not absolutely sure; but I know I love Henry; I am certain sure of it!"

"And I do hope you will be happy," said Marion, putting her arm around her; "although I shall miss you terribly, Alma, when you are married."

She leaned her beautiful head against her friend's shoulder, and Alma Allyn bent down and kissed her forehead.

"That is my only regret, Marion," she said, very softly. "We have been together ever since your sister Dollie was married! And, oh, what a lot of trouble we have seen! I don't know how I will ever bear to part with you, dearie!"

"But you will be in New York, and so will I," said Marion, trying to recover her spirits. "Mr. Temple has secured a theatre, and he wants me to stay with him. I haven't decided yet, it is so far away, but I'm almost sure to be in New York doing something or other."

"Trust you for that," laughed Miss Ellis, gayly. "You are always doing something or other, Miss Marlowe."

The girls all laughed, and then Marion looked at her watch. It was almost time to go to rehearsal.

"I wonder where Bert is?" said Miss Allyn, as they went slowly down the stairs.

Mr. Olcott, the "villain" of the company, came up just in time to answer her question.

"Jackson is down by the depot looking on at the fun, Miss Marlowe," he remarked. "There's a big strike on, and the railroad men are scrapping like the mischief. Why, the scrimmage when I left almost amounted to a riot!"

"I heard that there was a lot of trouble on the railroad," said Miss Allyn, quickly; "the men are determined to win their point, and, as the railroad company will not yield an inch, it looks as if they are going to have a serious time of it."

"That's what I told Jackson," said Olcott, quickly. "I advised him to come away when the men began fighting, but it seems his father is interested in one of the roads, and Bert expects he'll be sent for at any minute."

"Then I don't blame him for being interested," said Alma, quickly; "St. Louis isn't the safest place in the world for the president or directors of any of the railroads, just at present. It would be like shaking a red rag at a bull to let them see an official while they are so excited and angry."

"But isn't the mayor or somebody doing anything to quiet them?" asked Marion, anxiously.

Olcott shook his head.

"They're used to it, I guess. Of course, if anybody gets killed there'll be something done; but a few bricks and stones, and a few cracked skulls, won't cut any ice!"

"I fancy we shall play to poor houses, if there is so much excitement," said Miss Allyn, anxiously.

"Not a bit of it! The house is sold out

already!" called a cheery voice, as Dr. Reginald Brookes, the leading man, came rapidly across the lobby.

He smiled at Marion as he raised his hat. He was a handsome young man, of splendid physique and noble bearing.

"Miss Marlowe's name and fame have gone before her, as usual," he went on, jokingly. "The people of St. Louis will be charmed to see her; they are people of good taste, and will appreciate an artist."

The beautiful girl blushed beneath the ardent gaze, and Alma Allyn came promptly to the rescue.

"Of course they'll come to see her! They would be heathen if they didn't! But have you been to the theatre, doctor, and is it a nice one? I'm actually getting partciular what kind of a place I play in!"

"It's a good house—excellent," was the doctor's answer: "and the dressing-rooms are big enough to go in and turn around; you don't have to come out backward as you do in some of them."

"Tin mirrors or glass?" asked Marion, laughing.

"As if the doctor ever looked in a glass," murmured Miss Allyn. "Why, he never sees his reflection except in your eyes, Marion; he's not vain enough to look in a mirror."

"Hello! Everybody on deck?" called out a boyish voice.

They had reached the entrance now as Bert Jackson joined them. He had just returned from watching the trouble around the depot.

"Well, my respected governor will strike a hot crowd when he faces that mob," he said, candidly. "They've wired him to come on, and he's wired back that he's coming! There's to be a meeting of the directors to-night to see if a strike can be averted."

"What road is it, Bert?" asked the doctor.

"There are three of them in the muddle," answered Bert, as he rattled off the names. "Dad is one of the high cockalorums of the Missouri Pacific, and that's the one that's got the ugliest crowd at present."

"You'll be pretty nervous to-night, won't you, Bert?" asked Marion, anxiously. "Hadn't you better arrange with Mr. Temple to let one of the supes substitute for you? That new one we took on last week is a pretty clever fellow."

"Oh, I'll pull through all right, I guess," laughed Bert. "Pop can't get here before midnight, so it won't unsteady my nerves any, but what has Mr. Temple got up his sleeve? Does any one know? He's invited us all to some shindy or other, and, of course, I can't think of disappointing the manager."

"I can't imagine what it is," said Marion, smiling. "I fancy it must be a supper on the stage, or perhaps it's a trip to see some of the sights of the city."

"Oh, he'll see sights enough without going out of his way, if I'm any judge," laughed Bert. "This town is red hot; all it needs is more tinder. There'll be a conflagration before morning, if some one don't put up the damper."

They were walking toward the theatre as they talked, and had nearly reached the entrance.

"There it is now! Oh, no, it isn't! It's only that red-headed soubrette that joined the company yesterday," cried Miss Ellis, softly. "Her blazing locks made me think Bert's words had come true—that the town was really on fire!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE THEFT OF THE LETTERS.

"Well, the booby says he'll do it, and what do you think—he's a dandy at copying handwriting, Mab," whispered Lou Leland, as soon as the two girls reached their dressing-room in the theatre.

"Now, what I want to do is to get hold of one of this Archie Ray's letters. I haven't a doubt that Miss Marlowe has a stack of them!"

"But they are in her trunk, of course," was Mabel's cautious answer.

Lou tossed her head in lofty disdain.

"What of that! Her trunk is in her dressing-room, isn't it? All we've got to do is watch our chance; dodge the watchman and the rest of the push, and the rest is easy."

"It doesn't seem to me I'd care to do that," said the elder girl, with a little frown. "It looks like out-and-out stealing, and I consider stealing the limit."

"Pshaw! I'll put it back as soon as his joblots gets the hang of the chirography," said Lou; "and it isn't going to hurt her any to have me read it."

"I wonder if she is in love with the doctor, anyway," said Mabel, thoughtfully. "She's never injured me, and, if she is really in love with him——"

"Good gracious, Mab, what a gibbering idiot you are! What the mischief do you care about her feelings?" cried Lou, angrily. "Isn't that young doctor rich, and isn't he handsome! Why, you might never have another chance like this in a lifetime. But I understand you, Mab; you were gone on the kid, and now that you find he was brought up in a poorhouse, you promptly lose interest!"

She was so indignant over her friend's words that she singed her hair with the curling tongs, and a profane exclamation broke from her lips involuntarily.

"Look out, Lou! Better not let Miss Marlowe hear you use language like that," warned her friend; "she'd have you fired from the company in a minute!"

"Good land! This ain't a Sunday-school, is it, Mab?" retorted Lou. "I've been on the stage a good long time, Miss Maitland, and not a man, woman or child has ever objected to my swearing."

"Well, I'd go easy," said Mabel, with a cautious shake of her head. "That Miss Ellis, the *ingénue,* is right next door, and Mrs. Burnside and her little girl are on the other side. They'd tell, and that would settle it, in my opinion!"

"Oh, I suppose you are right," said Lou, lowering her voice; then she tiptoed to the door and listened a minute.

"She is in there—Miss Marlowe," she said, in a whisper. "I just heard her asking Miss Ellis for a piece of paper. I do hope I can get in her dressing-room some time during rehearsal; the sooner I get that letter the better."

"There's the call," cried Mabel, as she heard the stage manager's voice. "Hurry up, Lou. Oh, no you needn't! There's no fining in this company."

"I guess I'll go just the same," said Lou, starting for the door. "My game must be to make them think I'm an angel; then they won't suspect me when things begin to buzz! I'd be better off if I had your bump of caution, Mabbie!"

"All ready, girls?" called out a pleasant voice, as Mrs. Burnside, the "first old lady," as she was called, left her dressing-room leading her talented little daughter.

"Oh, what a dear, cunning little girl!" cried Lou, as she caught sight of Ruby. "I do love children so dearly, don't you, Mrs. Burnside? Really, I dote on children! They are the only things that make me happy!"

She winked at Mabel over her shoulder, but Mrs. Burnside was delighted. She always felt pleased with any one who spoke kindly of her darling.

Marion Marlowe stepped out of her dressing-room just then, and, as the door was wide open, Lou gave a quick glance inside.

"Oh, Miss Marlowe! How perfectly sweet you look in that hat," she said, gushingly. "I always did admire that shade of blue on chestnut hair! Why, your taste is divine! It is distinctly Parisian!"

Marion gazed at her wonderingly. She was not used to such open compliments except when they came from the lips of Miss Ellis.

"I am glad you like it. I thought it was pretty," she said, simply. "But, of course my taste cannot be Parisian, for I have never been to Paris—in fact, it is only a short time ago that I came from the country."

"Dear me! I should never have dreamed of it," cried Lou, as she followed Marion down the stairs. "Why, I was just saying to Miss Maitland that I did not wonder Mr. Jackson loved you. A face like yours would turn the head of any man, much more of such a young man as Mr. Jackson."

Marion smiled with amusement, but she was still staring a little.

"Bert loved me quite as well in homespun as he does in silk," she said, sweetly. "You know, we were neighbors when we were little, and lived in the country, Miss Leland! Why, we used to roam around the hills barefooted together."

They had reached the wings now, and there was no time to reply, but Lou Leland was satisfied that her cause was progressing.

"Then that yarn of the *ingénue* was all straight," she whispered to herself. "I was mistaken in thinking Bert Jackson had money. Well, I'm glad I found it out quick; but I'm sorry for Mab, for blest if I don't think she's really stuck on the fellow!"

She glanced across the stage to where her chum was standing, and a moment later her eyes snapped with a flash of anger.

Mabel was talking to the manager and smiling up into his face. It was provoking to see it, when she wanted all the attention.

"Well, she shan't have the doctor; no, nor Marion Marlowe shan't have him, either," she muttered, between her teeth. "He's the handsomest man by far in the company, and I have sworn a million times over to marry a man with money!"

A moment later she was at liberty to leave the stage; but as she made her exit she looked back over her shoulder.

Marion and the doctor were in the middle of a thrilling scene. Little Ruby was with them, and Mrs. Burnside was on the opposite side of the stage, watching. Both Mr. Temple and Mabel had disappeared, but she did not doubt for a moment that they were together.

There was only a dim light in the scene-room, but as she made her way carefully between the various ropes and around the numerous piles of scenery she caught sight of Olcott, Bert Jackson and Miss Ellis. It was all she wanted—to know where they were at that minute.

"Now is my chance," she muttered, as she darted down the stairs. "They won't one of them miss me, for I'll only be gone a second."

She had reached the door of Marion's dressing-room, which was now standing half ajar, and, exactly as she touched it, some one swung it violently open.

Lou gave a little cry and then stood perfectly still.

"Hush! I've got them—the whole batch!" whispered Mabel Maitland, excitedly. "I'll hide them in my bosom until we get back to the hotel, and then won't we have fun learning all of the star's secrets!"

Lou was petrified for a minute; but there was nothing to be done. A minute later she was listening f
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"Oh, Alma! What do you think has happened! I have lost or mislaid all of Archie Ray's letters!"

Marion Marlowe said the words with a sort of gasp as she was rummaging through the trunk in her dressing-room just before the evening performance.

Alma was touching up her eyebrows with cosmetic as her friend spoke, but she immediately dropped the pencil and went over beside her.

"Are you sure they were in the trunk?" she asked, anxiously.

Marion wrinkled her white forehead in an effort to remember.

"They must have been, Alma. There is no other place that I could have put them in, unless——"

"Unless they are in your trunk at the hotel, and that is probably where they are, dearie. You can't have mislaid them; the pile was too big! Let's see, how many did you have—about five hundred?"

"Oh, Alma, what a tease you are!" said Marion, laughing. "There were only about a dozen; the rest were all destroyed. It isn't my practice to keep many letters."

"Love letters, you mean," went on Miss Allyn, jokingly. "Well, it isn't a good plan. I never keep them, either. The insurance companies object, you know, my dear; and really, it is dangerous to be carrying such ardent epistles about with you; they are liable to go up any minute in spontaneous combustion!"

"I don't receive that kind, Alma, so you need not try to tease! Mr. Ray's letters were lovely, of course, but they were not love letters; not what you would call 'love letters,' at any rate, Alma."

"Well, you've been mighty careful of them, Marion, that's all I've got to say," laughed Alma. "Why, the minute you get one you hide it away where no eye but your own shall see so much as the inscription."

"Pshaw! are gone; I feel sure of it," said joblots gadly. "But I have no time to search said Lo or the orchestra is beginning. I do to ha I shall find them safe at the hotel. It ould worry me terribly if I didn't."

"You'll find them; I'm sure of it, dear," said Alma, sweetly; "so come and fix this rose in my hair, there's a good girl, Marion. You know, I always wear one to make me think of Henry."

"Your lover is fond of roses, isn't he?" said Marion, thoughtfully. "Mr. Ray is very fond of them, too; they are his favorite flower. If I ever decide that I love him I shall always wear roses."

Marion was smiling now, and her beautiful eyes sparkled.

"And what will you wear when you decide that it is the doctor whom you love and not Archie Ray?" asked Alma, slyly.

"I think his favorite flower is the violet," was the blushing answer; then the young girl burst into a ripple of laughter.

"And Bert prefers daisies—field daisies, Alma! Of course, I must consider Bert, for he still insists that I am his sweetheart! And, do you know, Alma, sometimes I think that I, too, love the daisy!"

"Oh, I suppose it will go that way; it always does," said Alma, musingly. "You'll marry Bert yet, you see if you don't; and, oh, dear, what will become of the unfortunate others!"

"First call!"

The words rang out so sharply that both of the girls jumped.

"Oh, Bert! Is that you? My, how you startled us!" cried Marion, running to the door. "I was sure it was not time to go down just yet. Why, I am as nervous as anything, and I don't know what has made me so."

"I know," began Miss Allyn, and then stopped short. She had caught a glimpse of Lou Leland just outside of the door, and from instinctive caution she did not finish her sentence.

"How is the strike getting on, Bert?" she asked, instead. "Is any one hurt yet, and have you heard from your father?"

Bert paused in the doorway, with Lou directly behind him.

"There were two men hurt with brickbats an hour ago," he said, nervously; "and some one fired a revolver, but it didn't happen to do any damage! I tell you, Marion, this having a father is awful! Why, when I was an orphan I didn't have a blooming thing to worry about, and now every time I think of the governor facing that mob, I almost wish I was back on the poor farm!"

"Poor Bert! I understand you perfectly," murmured Marion, sympathetically.

Lou Leland took a few light steps into a neighboring dressing-room.

"I'm glad she understands him, but I'm blessed if I do," she muttered under her breath. "But I'll listen a minute, and perhaps I can solve the mystery. There was another step in the hallway, and Miss Ellis appeared directly behind her.

"Hello, Miss Leland," she began, in a tone of surprise.

"Oh, there you are!" exclaimed Lou, facing the *ingénue* calmly. "I thought you were here, and I came to borrow a pin. There's not such a thing in my whole theatrical outfit!"

Miss Ellis handed her the pin, and Lou promptly made her exit.

Ten seconds after she was gone Miss Ellis suddenly came to her senses.

"Why, what a fib that was," she whispered to herself. "There was a whole paper of pins on her dressing-table not half an hour ago! I'll bet the little red-head was in here listening!"

Marion and Bert were still chatting in the doorway of Marion's room, and for just a minute Miss Ellis was strongly tempted to tell them.

"No, I won't," she thought, after a few minutes' reflection. "I won't tell tales; I never did; but I'll keep my eyes open a little sharper. Let me catch you flirting with Bert, you little snip, and I'll poke your eyes out with the curling iron!"

She waved the weapon she had mentioned threateningly in her excitement, and a scream of laughter from Mrs. Burnside made her turn around suddenly.

"Well, of all things! Miss Ellis is on the road to fame at last!" called the lady, delightedly. "Why, she is actually practicing tragedy before her mirror!"

The *ingénue* joined in the laugh, good-naturedly, but she was still flushed with indignation.

"Didn't I do that well?" she tried to say, calmly. "Oh, I can act like a house afire; you've never seen me yet! Just wait until I am called upon to play a tragedy in real life, and I expect to be called upon to play it before long, too, and—well, to put it mildly, Sarah Bernhardt won't be in it!"

"I'm sure of it," laughed Mrs. Burnside, who was brimming over with fun. "Why, the way you flourished that curling iron was absolute proof of genius! Miss Marlowe will be vanquished utterly when you let loose, Miss Ellis!"

"She shall never be vanquished—never!" exclaimed the *ingénue*, hotly; then she raised her voice so she was sure that Miss Leland would hear her: "No person that I love shall ever be vanquished, Mrs. Burnside! I shall protect them to the bitter end, or as long as I am able! I give everybody warning who has any designs against them!"

"Hurrah! That's right! You are made of the right stuff!" cried Bert, delightedly. "But there's the 'second call.' Get a move on, the whole lot of you!"

CHAPTER VI.

BERT JACKSON'S MODESTY.

Five minutes after the curtain was rung down on the first act Lou Leland and her chum were back in their dressing-room, the door was locked, and they were both talking in whispers.

"Now, what do you make out of that, Mab?" asked Lou, as she repeated Bert's conversation with Marion about his father.

"There's a screw loose somewhere," was the cautious answer. "Is it possible that the *ingénue* was stringing us, Lou? She doesn't look clever enough for that; but you can't always tell! Ten to one she's in love with him, and is only trying to keep us from getting interested."

"I'll find out," muttered Lou, between her teeth. "He certainly talked about his father, and as if he was connected with a railroad! I'll make it a point to solve that problem this very night, and, if he is really rich, Miss Ellis had better look out! I'll pay her back handsomely for telling that fairy tale about 'stage money!'"

"Hush! There comes Olcott, the villain. I know his whistle! By the way, what do you think of him, Lou? A sort of nonentity in the company, isn't he?"

"Yes, he's as out of place as we are; but he's all right in his part. It won't hurt to sound him a little before the evening is over."

There was a moment of silence as the girls hurried with their toilets; then Lou spoke again, lowering her voice very cautiously.

"How are you and the manager progressing, Mab? I saw you making eyes at him over in one of the wings. Is it possible he has escaped falling in love with Miss Marlowe?"

Mabel finished rouging her cheeks before she replied, and then her answer was accompanied with a frown of vexation.

"I don't know what to make of him at all, Lou," she said, honestly. "He's very smiling and sweet, but there's something queer about him. He gives one the impression that he is just jollying them along, but, of course, I may be wrong. I'm a bit morbid on that subject."

"Ahem! You've done a little jollying yourself in your day, and you know what it means," said Lou, a trifle nastily. "Well, go easy with him, Mab, that's all I've got to say! If he ever finds out our reputations as women, we may as well quit. We are not bad actresses, but—well, we are not saints in private life; and he'd be afraid that our presence might contaminate Miss Marlowe!"

"Pshaw! Those angel faces don't always prove innocence," said Mab, contemptuously. "She may be perfect, but I have my doubts; but—hello! what the dickens do you want, Miss Ellis?"

The exclamation was made in alarm, for the door was suddenly burst open, and the *ingénue* was standing before them, her eyes blazing with indignation.

"How dare you!" she whispered, in a low but furious tone; "how dare you speak, or even think slightingly of Marion Marlowe!"

There was a light footstep outside as Marion tripped down to the stage; but Miss Ellis

only lowered her voice so that the star should not hear her.

As soon as the sound of the steps had died away she went on angrily, while both Lou and Mabel stared at her sulkily.

"I was just passing the door when I heard your last remarks. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for expressing such sentiments!"

"I didn't say anything against her," muttered Lou, a little lamely. "I merely said that angel faces didn't——"

"I heard what you said!" broke in Miss Ellis; "and now I want you to remember exactly one thing: I won't say a word now, but don't you ever repeat those remarks! If you dare to think evil of Marion Marlowe or any girl in this company, you want to be mighty careful and keep your thoughts to yourself! You'd go out of the cast flying if I should tell Mr. Temple!"

There was a call from the stage, and Miss Ellis had to go, but she gave them both a parting scowl as she turned to leave them.

"Jerusalem! What a spitfire!" muttered Lou when she had gone. "She's as much in love with the star as the doctor, I believe! Well, I'll be mighty careful what you hear me say in future, you young fury!"

"There's Bert Jackson, Lou! He doesn't go on for ten minutes! Go out and talk to him," said Mabel, softly, as she hurried from the dressing-room.

Lou sauntered out into the hallway between the dressing-rooms and saw Bert standing idly at the top of the stairs, kicking one foot against a pile of rubbish in a thoughtful manner.

"You are worried about something, aren't you, Mr. Jackson?" she said, sweetly.

Bert looked up quickly, and in a second his usually gay spirits returned.

"I'm love-sick," he said, laughing. "Can't you recognize the symptoms? Here you have been in the company two whole days, Miss Leland, and not a ghost of a smile have you given a fellow!"

Lou's eyes opened in wonder, but Bert's manner deceived her. If he had been actually pining for her smiles he could not have spoken more wistfully.

"Dear me! How lovely of you! Why, I did not dream that you wanted me to smile at you," she murmured, as she went up close beside him. "I thought you were desperately in love with Miss Marlowe—the *ingénue* said that you were."

"So I am," said Bert, promptly: "but Marion won't look at me! Oh, I am simply dying of unrequited affection! If some one don't love me pretty soon, I'll go out and hang myself!"

"Don't do that, Mr. Jackson! I should miss you awfully," said the girl, as she laid one hand on his shoulder. "Really, I can't understand Miss Marlowe's actions! She must be blind not to care for you; but perhaps she is in love with some other fellow."

"That's the trouble! They all are, every one of them!" groaned Bert. "Every girl I meet has a sweetheart somewhere! Oh, it's no use trying; I'm a Jonah in the love business!"

Lou cast down her eyes and tried to look demure.

"I haven't any sweetheart," she whispered, significantly; "and, oh, I am so interested in your story, Mr. Jackson! Is it really true that you were brought up on a poor farm?"

"Straight as a die!" laughed Bert, with a sharp glance at her face; "only I wasn't brought up, Miss Leland; I was yanked up! I was an orphan and a pauper—how is that for a beginning!"

"And now you are——"

Lou breathed the words softly and stood a moment waiting. She was almost trembling in her eagerness to hear how he would answer.

"Now I am the comedian in the greatest theatrical company on earth! I'm the one and only actor who ever achieved distinction and renown without getting a swelled head and losing a few dozen of his buttons! Oh, I'm glad for your sake that you have met me, Miss Leland! You ought to have it framed and put it in your scrap-book, that you have actually beheld with your own eyes the ——"

"Bert! Bert! What in the world are you doing! Go down on the stage if you are going to make a stump speech! It's a shame the audience can't hear you!" called out Alma Allyn's voice, suddenly.

Bert put both hands into his pockets and sauntered down the stairs, leaving Lou standing like a statue, wondering what in the world had happened.

"He's a funny boy," went on Miss Allyn, gayly. "Bert is a comedian by nature as well as by vocation! I'm beginning to think there is only one 'Bert Jackson.'"

"Lucky thing there isn't another," broke in a voice from the next dressing-room, where Mrs. Burnside was busy changing little Ruby's costume.

"If there should happen to be two we'd all have to divide our affections again, and, for myself, I don't care to do that, Alma! My heart will never contain more than Mr. Temple, Bert and the doctor!"

"I can go you one better! My affection is quartered!" laughed Miss Allyn. "Now, I wonder if Marion will be honest and tell us the condition of her heart—just how many lovers inhabit the different corners!"

There was a gay laugh from Marion as she came up the stairs.

"There is only one lover in my heart, Alma! There could never be but one," she said, gayly. "Why, if I loved one truly there would be no room for the others; my love for one would absorb my whole soul; that is my nature, I guess; and at present my art is my lover! I am not so fortunate as some of my friends, Alma!"

Lou Leland went down to the stage more mystified than ever. She was indeed out of place in this extraordinary company.

But there were other things to puzzle over besides what she had heard, for her roommate's actions were, to say the least, peculiar.

Something must have altered her opinions wonderfully, or she would not have taken it upon herself to confiscate the letters. Lou could not imagine what it was, but she was on the lookout for treachery.

CHAPTER VII.

MABEL TRIES LOVE-MAKING.

Marion had guessed right. Mr. Temple's surprise was a supper, and every member of the company was present except Miss Leland.

Lou had been met at the stage door by a young man immediately after the performance, but she had left a polite note of regret for the manager.

"We have been on the road four weeks to-day," said Mr. Temple, as he seated his guests at the table, which had been spread upon the stage while they were dressing after the final curtain.

"It doesn't seem possible that it has been so long," said Marion, dreamily. "What a happy time we have had together."

Dr. Brookes looked at her tenderly. She had spoken his very thoughts. It had been the happiest month of his whole existence.

When the company started on its road tour it was not intended to last longer than a month, but that month had been so successful that the tour was prolonged a few weeks.

Marion was dressed all in white, and was looking exquisitely beautiful, and, as the doctor looked at her, he suddenly thought of something. Although he had managed to prolong his vacation, he realized that in another month at most he must go back to his practice. He had been fortunate in securing a well-known physician to take charge of his practice while he was away, but he had lately received word from his co-worker that would make his return absolutely necessary within a few weeks. Besides, it was his duty to return and continue his career of usefulness in the city. But how could he part with this beautiful girl, who had grown daily dearer and dearer until he now almost adored her?

Marion had refused to marry him some time before. She was devoted to him as a friend, but she was too honest to say that she loved him. It was impossible for her to look into his eyes without reading his adoration, but from the day of her refusal he had not breathed a word of his affection.

Now, as the jolly chatting went on, both Marion and Miss Allyn were thinking of his devotion.

"Things are still lively around the town," said Olcott, as he helped Miss Maitland to a bit of salad. "One of the rioters was killed at ten o'clock. I heard an 'extra' at eleven, so I ran to the door and bought one."

Bert looked grave in an instant, and Marion glanced at him sympathetically.

"Poor fellow! He was a good man, too," went on Olcott, calmly. "The paper said he'd

been out of work until he was almost crazy! He leaves a wife and one child, who are on the verge of starvation!"

"They won't starve, you bet!" said Bert, emphatically. "When dad comes I shall strike him for a few hundred in cash, and I'll see how much good I can do with it among those poor devils!"

Miss Maitland opened her eyes, and Miss Ellis choked a little. The secret was out; she could not prevent it.

As she glanced across the table at the soubrette she saw the girl glaring at her angrily, but the angry expression only made her more hysterical.

"She'll make a dead set for him, now that she knows for sure he's rich," she said, under her beath to Miss Allyn, who was sitting next to her.

Miss Allyn looked across the table and understood instantly.

"So that's the way the wind blows, is it?" she asked, softly. "I was beginning to think she was angling for the manager."

"Have some chicken, Miss Allyn," called out Mr. Temple, and a waiter hired for the occasion appeared promptly at her elbow.

"Your supper is lovely, Mr. Temple, and I am enjoying it hugely," was Miss Allyn's answer. "I doubt if ever a theatrical company had such a manager before!"

"And I am sure no manager ever had such a company!" retorted Mr. Temple, promptly.

"Oh, we are the only pebbles on the beach! No doubt about it!" broke in Bert, promptly. "Take us all together, we are the greatest combination on record! But it is twelve o'clock, Mr. Temple, and I beg that you will excuse me! I really must go to the train and meet the governor! There's to be a midnight meeting of the railroad directors."

"We'll all go!" spoke up Mr. Temple, quickly. "We'll get three or four carriages and have a look over the town, just to compare it with Chicago, you know," he finished, laughing.

"Better not say that where any of the St. Louis folks can hear you," said Olcott, quickly; "they'd mob the carriages if they thought we recognized the existence of Chicago."

"Well, then we'll substitute New York," was the manager's answer; "that, surely, is too far away to admit of jealousy!"

They all rose from the table, and after thanking Mr. Temple again for his little surprise there was a rush for the dressing-rooms for hats and gloves, and then the entire company grouped themselves in the scene-room to wait for the carriages.

"It must be lovely to be rich," sighed Miss Maitland in Bert's ear as they all stood waiting. "Is your father a railroad president, Mr. Jackson?"

"He's lots of things," said Bert, proudly. "He's a railroad president, a bank president, a director in a dozent different things, and trustee for about a hundred; and the best thing of all, he's a glorious old governor! Just the kind of a dad that ought to have a dozen boys, and not be forced to lavish all his wealth and affection on one good-for-nothing like me!"

"I guess you are anything but a 'good-for-nothing,'" said Miss Maitland, sweetly. "I guess you are a very fine young man—and a very handsome one, too," she murmured, softly.

Bert took off his hat with great effusiveness.

"Things seem to be coming my way today—bouquets, I mean! Thanks, awfully, Miss Maitland! I'm glad you think so!"

"Miss Ellis thinks so, too," whispered the soubrette, cautiously.

Bert was chewing a bit of a splinter that he had just pulled from a scrap of pine board in the scene-room, but, although he glanced quickly at the girl, he did not answer.

"Do you like her very much—the *ingénue*, I mean?" went on Mabel, eagerly. "I saw you looking at her so—so tenderly, you know. Is there anything between you? I am just dying to know, Mr. Jackson."

"Why don't you ask her?"

Bert asked the question politely.

"She wouldn't tell! Girls never do; and, oh, I want to know so badly! Can't you guess why I want to know, you lovely fellow?"

Bert dropped his splinter and stared at her a minute.

"I'll be blowed if I can!" he admitted, hon-

estly; "unless you've fallen in love with me yourself, which is hardly possible, seeing there are two others in the company who are better worth loving."

"But neither of them is as attractive," simpered the girl, with a shy glance at him.

Bert put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a silver dollar.

"Here, take that! It's all I've got," he said, with a grimace; "and if you don't think it's enough, come around to-morrow!"

Miss Maitland gasped. It was not what she expected.

The next minute, with a low bow the comedian left her.

"The wretch!" she muttered, furiously. "Oh, I could pull his hair out! Having fun with me, is he? Well, I'll bet I'll get square with him!"

"What's the matter, Miss Maitland? You look as if you'd been chewing nails," called out Miss Ellis, merrily.

Bert had sauntered past her and given her a wink, and the *ingénue* was fairly bubbling over with merriment.

"Here are the carriages, sir!" called out the door-tender at that minute.

Bert glanced at his watch; it was a quarter past midnight. The next minute he was helping Marion to her seat in the first carriage.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADVICE.

"Well, I was agreeably surprised, weren't you, Jackson?"

Mr. Temple asked the question the morning after the supper and the ride through the city.

"I expected to see bloodshed, if not murder, there last night."

"Yes," laughed Bert, "but the crowd did not know which one was the governor, and the officials sneaked pop up some back alley and got him into the committee-room before the strikers caught on. I waited around and put in a word when I could. I meant to distract their attention until he was safe, if possible."

"You are a good son, Bert. I fancy you would make a good husband," said the manager, thoughtfully. "Own up, my boy; have you ever thought of marrying?"

"Sure! Who hasn't?" laughed Bert. "But I'll be serious, Mr. Temple. How can I ever think of marrying when I'm in love with Marion?"

Mr. Temple smiled sadly. He was in exactly that position himself. He adored his star, but she was as indifferent toward his suit as she was to all her lovers.

"Why not try to love some one else?" he said, after a minute. "You are young, you know, Bert; you ought not to be so firm in your opinions. There is some nice young girl waiting for you somewhere."

"I wish I believed it," said Bert, very soberly. "A month ago I'd have said let her wait, but I'm beginning to see that my case is hopeless with Marion."

"I doubt if Miss Marlowe will ever marry," replied Mr. Temple. "She certainly will not for some years, at any rate. She takes the subject of matrimony far more seriously than most young girls, and she's quite right, too; it is a very serious matter."

"You bet it is! Oh, I've thought about it a lot! I suppose I'll get married some time, but I'm going slow—for dad's sake as much as my own," he added.

"Miss Ellis is a charming girl," said Mr. Temple, after a minute.

Bert put his hands in his pockets, and answered briefly:

"Very charming, Mr. Temple."

"She'd make a splendid wife, Bert."

"Think so, Mr. Temple?"

"And she's stuck on you, my boy!" he went on, softly.

"Nonsense!" was the prompt answer. "You are dreaming, Mr. Temple."

"Well, then, there's Miss Leland, the little soubrette," suggested the manager, with a twinkle in his eye. "She gives one the impression that she is willing to get married."

"I hope she may have luck," drawled Bert, good-naturedly.

"And Miss Maitland's glances are indicative of unutterable things," went on the manager.

"That's right!" blurted Bert. "They are unutterable, old man! Why, if that blond-

eyed fairy should ever speak what she thinks the volcanoes of her scorn would blow me to blazes!"

Mr. Temple stared at him. He did not understand in the least, but Bert had gone off into a spasm of chuckling.

"Well, I see I can't help you out," said the manager, after a minute. "I have exhausted the names of all the available ladies of the company."

"Another thing, old man!" cried Bert, recovering his breath; "I wouldn't dream of paying my distresses to Miss Maitland! Why, haven't I seen you throwing a few smiles in that direction?"

"For a purpose, Bert," said the manager, gravely. "I have reasons for doing it. I want to study her. If she's the girl I think she is, I don't want her in the company."

"But, ain't it a kind of mean way to go about it?" asked Bert, laughingly. "Is it just fair to make her think you are sweet on her, and get her to commit herself and then turn her down, Mr. Temple?"

The manager flushed a little, but he replied with equal candor.

"You don't know that class of girls, Bert. I hope you'll never know them! Wait until you have been in this business as many years as I have, and you'll find you have to do a good many things that are not quite fair in order to get ahead of the designing creatures."

"Oh, you know your business, I suppose," said Bert. "I only meant that I couldn't understand it."

"Well, there's something else that I can't understand," said the manager. "I saw Miss Leland on the street as we were coming home last night. The rest of you did not see her, so I didn't say a word; but the girl was in bad company and she had evidently been drinking."

Bert's eyes opened wide, but he did not answer, and Mr. Temple continued:

"I'm afraid I made a mistake, Jackson, when I hired those two girls; but we needed soubrettes for the new piece we are putting on, and they were the best that the theatrical bureaus out here had to offer."

"They are not bad actresses," said Bert, thoughtfully.

"No, but that isn't all that is required in this company," was the answer. "I promised Miss Marlowe to keep the atmosphere of the company as pure as possible, and I'm afraid these two girls are going to make trouble."

"I hope not. We've had trouble enough," was Bert's emphatic reply.

They had been standing in the lobby of the theatre as they talked, watching the people come in; but, as Bert made his last remark, he sauntered out on the sidewalk.

"Been down street this morning, Jackson?" asked Dr. Brookes, coming up. "It looks quite military, I can tell you; but it's as serene as a grave-yard."

"I guess the strike will be settled before night," was Bert's answer, "and I'm glad of it, for all of these things affect business a little, and we want a good week while we are here, if the thing is possible."

"I'll be glad to see some mail," said the doctor, anxiously. "I correspond with several of my patients while I am on my vacation, and it's been nearly a week now since I heard from any of them."

"Here comes Marion," cried Bert, as he saw a coupé coming down the street. The next moment Marion and Miss Allyn were standing beside them.

"What's the matter, Marion?" asked Bert the minute he saw her. "You look distressed over something! Do tell me what has happened!"

Marion bit her lips, and her cheeks flushed a little. She hated to speak of the loss of Archie Ray's letters before Dr. Brookes for fear of paining him by mentioning the name of his rival.

"Marion has a touch of the blues," said Miss Allyn, quickly. "She ought not to have gone on that ride last night! She's seen misery and trouble enough without gazing at those poor, unfortunate strikers. It was a great mistake! I shouldn't have allowed it."

Marion did not reply; she was hurrying into the theatre with Dr. Brookes at her side, looking decidedly anxious.

"I should have thought of that, Marion," he said, softly, as they walked along. "You have indeed seen sorrow enough! I wish it

were possible to make the future always bright and joyous!"

"If the kind wishes of my friends would do it, it would certainly be done," answered the young girl, gratefully. "You are all so good and kind that I am positively ashamed to be unhappy."

Miss Allyn and Bert had caught up with them now, and they all went around to the stage door, chatting and laughing gayly.

The two new members of the cast were in their dressing-room when Marion arrived, but the door was closed and locked, as usual.

CHAPTER IX.

MYSTERY.

Three days of their engagement had passed and Marion was still unable to trace the lost package of letters.

She grieved over them deeply, not only because she would have been glad to read them again, but because she disliked exceedingly to have them read by others.

"Whoever took them did so for a purpose," said Miss Allyn, as they sat in their room in the hotel, talking over their mysterious disappearance.

"Now, who in the world could have any interest in those particular letters? There were others in the trunk from other friends. Why the mischief did they select Archie Ray's and not touch the others?"

Marion shook her head. That was exactly what had been puzzling her. She knew of no one who could have any interest in Archie Ray's letters.

"I have a notion to tell Miss Ellis," said Alma, again. "She might think of some solution, and yet it is doubtful. And she would only worry, poor girl; she does love you so dearly, Marion."

"And I love her," said Marion, promptly. "She is one of the truest, most loyal girls I know! Oh, why is it that Bert doesn't fall in love with her!"

"I can tell you if you wish me to," said Miss Allyn, quickly.

Marion's round cheeks flushed, and she lowered her lids instantly.

"No, Alma, don't!" she said, with a faint smile. "Bert is a goose to go on longing for the unattainable! I shall never marry; I am almost sure of it, Alma!"

"Nonsense! What does a girl of your age know about her future capacity for loving, Marion? Why, with your disposition, you can't help loving sometime! And how you will love! Deeply, desperately, passionately! Oh, the man that wins your love will be a fortunate fellow! He will have all that is possible in this world to make him happy!"

Marion breathed a sigh. She could hardly believe it, yet deep down in her heart she was longing for just this experience.

There was a tap on the door and Alma hastened to open it. One of the supers from the theatre was distributing a batch of letters.

"There are two for you and one for me," she called out happily; "and, oh, what a lot he has for Dr. Brookes! He'll be glad to get them, for I presume they are from his patients!"

"Mine are from sister Dolly and Mr. Everett," said Marion, as she glanced at them. "I am so glad to get them, especially Mr. Everett's! Just think, we haven't heard from him since we left him at Albany!"

"Where he helped us out of that awful scrape," added Alma, thoughtfully. "Well, I suppose he is back in New York working hard on his paper."

"And to think that you are never going back—to the newspaper work, I mean! Aren't you very, very glad, Alma?" asked Marion, sweetly.

"I am, indeed," was her friend's low answer; "and you would think my lover was, too, if you could read this letter! He says he is finding it unbearable to wait until Easter!"

"How sweet such words sound! Oh, I do envy you, Alma! But go on, dear, I know you are longing to read your letter."

There was a silence for a few minutes, and then Miss Allyn folded her letter, and a second later Mrs. Burnside entered.

"Girls! Girls! Have you seen the doctor?" she asked, quickly. "I met him in the hall just now with a handful of open letters. His face was as white as a sheet, and he was so excited he did not see me!"

Marion started from her chair in alarm, but her friend checked her.

"One of his patients has died, perhaps; that would upset him terribly," she said, quickly. "He would imagine at once that he had neglected them."

"Oh, I do hope it is nothing worse," said Marion, eagerly; "but I can't help thinking that you have guessed wrong, Alma! I feel sure that it is something else—something entirely different!"

"Oh, Marion! those intuitions of yours! How I have learned to dread them!" cried Miss Allyn. "But we must wait, dear! It will never do to force our sympathy upon the doctor! If he wishes us to know his trouble, he will certainly tell us!"

Marion sank back in her chair, fairly trembling with nervousness.

"You are right, Alma, of course," she said, in trembling tones; "but, oh, I long to go to him, to comfort him if I can! I cannot bear the thought that he is in trouble and suffering!"

"You do love him, Marion! You must!" cried Alma, impulsively.

Mrs. Burnside nodded her head and stood waiting for the young girl to answer.

There was another tap on the door, and Miss Ellis burst in, her honest face fairly distorted with excitement.

"Oh, Marion! Oh, Alma! What do you think!" she cried, hysterically. "Dr. Brookes has had some news, and he is going to leave us! I believe he is packing his trunk in his room this minute!"

Marion sprang to her feet. This was more than she could bear. The next moment she had darted out of the room and was running down the corridor.

"Dear me! What has happened?"

It was Miss Maitland's voice.

The three occupants looked up as she appeared upon the threshold.

"I just saw Miss Marlowe fairly flying down the hall," she continued, calmly. "Is the hotel on fire? Do tell me, somebody! I'll have a convulsion fit if some one don't satisfy my curiosity."

No one answered for a moment, and then Alma Allyn spoke coldly.

"Dr. Brookes has had bad news and is about to leave the company."

It was Mabel Maitland's turn to look surprised. This was not what she hoped or expected of the doctor.

She turned upon her heel without a word and started to leave the room, only to come face to face with her chum, Lou Leland.

"Dr. Brookes has had bad news and is leaving the company," she repeated, parrot-like.

Lou Leland gasped, and then gave a sharp glance at the others.

The expression upon her face only added mystery to mystery.

CHAPTER X.

A DISCOVERY.

Marion tapped upon the doctor's door three times, but there was no answer; then she called his name, but still all was silent. He was in there; she was sure of it; then why did he refuse her? It was a question that astonished as much as it grieved her.

With her heart aching with sympathy, she turned away and walked slowly down the corridor.

She could not go back to her own room just yet, for she wanted to think what could have happened.

At the end of the long hall she met Mr. Temple, just coming in from the theatre, where he had been busy all the morning.

The moment she saw him she burst out impulsively.

"Oh, Mr. Temple! Do tell me what has happened!. Has the doctor had bad news, and is he going to leave the company? Miss Ellis just said so, but I do hope she is mistaken!"

Mr. Temple looked grave and decidedly worried.

"The doctor has certainly had bad news," he said, quickly; "but he will not leave until I can get another leading man. I have not asked him his trouble, because I did not wish to force my sympathy upon him; but I confess that it is worrying me, because I admire the doctor greatly."

"I know you do! Every one admires him who knows him!" said the young girl, warmly; "and I am glad he is not going to run away at once, not only for my own sake, but for yours, Mr. Temple!"

"Yes, it will be hard for me to replace him," was the answer, as the manager's brow wrinkled. "I have thought and thought, but I don't know an actor that can touch him—at least, none that I can secure in this part of the country. I am sorry to detain him, too," he went on, slowly. "He is very anxious to go, and at first I thought he would not consent to my prayer; but Dr. Brookes never thinks of himself when he can think of others. He will bear his trouble, whatever it is, rather than put me to any inconvenience."

"Oh, I am so sorry for him!" cried Marion, with tears springing to her eyes.

Mr. Temple looked at her searchingly, and then sighed, as he answered:

"You are very fond of him, are you not, Marion? Don't be afraid to tell me, dear; I have conquered my jealousy completely."

The young girl's voice trembled, but she looked him fairly in the face as she replied:

"I am fond of him, very; but not as you mean, Mr. Temple," she said, softly. "I think Dr. Brookes is the noblest man I ever met, and sometimes I wonder how I can be so incapable of giving him my affection."

She walked away as she spoke without giving him a chance to reply, and a minute later she was alone with Miss Allyn.

"Well, I can't understand it a little bit," said her friend, when she had told her about the doctor. "It is not like Dr. Brookes to act that way; but, mark my words, Marion, he'll come out of that room just as calm as ever! Whatever it is, he will get the best of it. He is too brave and too unselfish to ever inflict his troubles on others."

"If he only knew how gladly I would help him," sighed Marion. "Why, there is nothing I would not do to help him bear his troubles!"

"Listen, dearie!" said Miss Allyn, suddenly. "I thought I heard Bert's whistle. He rooms with the doctor, so perhaps he knows! I wonder if it would be right for us to ask him."

Marion sprang to her feet and ran to the door, and the next minute Bert was shaking his head in answer to her question.

"He got a lot of letters, and one of them knocked him out completely," he said, anxiously. "I asked him what the trouble was, and he laughed a sickly kind of laugh and told me he couldn't tell me; that it was the kind of thing a fellow couldn't divide; but that he'd brace up after a little, and for me not to worry. If the doctor had been in love with some girl and she had thrown him over I could have understood; but as it is, I'm blest if I can make anything out of it."

Marion wiped her eyes. There was nothing to be done. If the doctor did not wish any sympathy, she must try not to show any.

"It is all we can do to respect his wishes," she said, quietly; "but I do hope he will see his way clear to stay with the company. It would be dreadful to lose him before our tour is over!"

Bert left them a minute later with the thoughtful expression still upon his features. He could not endure the thought of the doctor leaving them. He walked slowly down the street, intending to go to the theatre, but there were railroad tracks nearby, and he could see a group of workmen talking excitedly together.

"I guess I'll go over and hear what is going on," was his first thought.

The next minute a score or more of the workmen turned and came rapidly in his direction.

Bert was listening to their angry words as they passed, when he was suddenly made aware of a light step behind him.

He turned to see Lou Leland, almost out of breath, running as hard as she could, and smiling at him sweetly.

"Oh, Mr. Jackson! Do wait for me!" she called, in a coquettish voice. "You naughty fellow, I believe you were actually hurrying for fear I should catch you! Am I so very disagreeable, Mr. Jackson?"

"On the contrary, you are positively bewitching!" replied Bert, promptly. "Why, if I had known you were behind me I would have walked backward all the way! It's a wonder that my heart did not tell me of your nearness, Miss Leland!"

"Don't call me that—please don't," murmured the girl. "I would be so delighted to have you call me Lou—just you alone, you know! I would not dream of granting that privilege to any one else in the company."

"What an honor," was Bert's answer, as

he gave her a broad smile. "My dear Lou, I never dreamed of being allowed such a favor as that. Why, really, you make me feel that you think something of me!"

"Why shouldn't I, Bert? You are such a handsome young man! Now, don't think that is flattery; it's just the gospel truth! I wouldn't dream of saying such a thing if I didn't mean it."

"I'm sure you wouldn't," replied Bert, promptly; then it suddenly occurred to him to do a little pumping.

"You pretty actresses are so deceitful," he began, with great apparent seriousness. "You make a fellow think that he is the only man in the world, when perhaps you have a dozen or so lovers in every city you play in."

"Oh, Mr. Jackson! How dreadful! Why, I have never had a lover!" cried the girl, with a simper. "I'm not like Marion Marlowe; she's had scores, they tell me! I'm just a poor little girl that nobody loves; and, oh, it is so dreadful to be nobody's sweetheart."

"The poor little thing!" murmured Bert again. "What, not a single lover, and no nice friends, either?"

"I don't know a soul except the members of the companies that I play in," said the girl, promptly; "and I tell you, I am so lonely that I could cry this minute!"

"Don't, please—don't! There's a cop looking!" said Bert, still seriously. "He might think you were my wife, and that I had been abusing you!"

"Nonsense! How could he?" whispered the girl, looking up with a gay smile. "Why, any one to look at you would know you would make an angelic husband! You would never abuse any one. Why, Bert, dear, you couldn't!"

The group of men had become so excited now that they had stopped and were completely blocking the sidewalk.

Before answering, Bert took the soubrette's arm and attempted to lead her across the street to safety.

This action on his part took Lou a little by surprise, as she was still gazing into his face and trying to make her words seem impressive.

As he touched her arm, there was a slight rustle of paper; then a small parcel that she was carrying under her cape dropped with a thud to the pavement.

Bert bent over instantly to pick it up, but as he touched it the string slipped off and a dozen or more letters were scattered over the sidewalk.

The girl gave a sharp cry and tried hastily to gather them up, but Bert had seen enough to almost paralyze his senses.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked, sternly, as he touched the girl's shoulder. "How did you come by that bundle of Marion Marlowe's letters?"

CHAPTER XI.

COLDNESS.

Lou Leland did not answer his question; she did not even wait to hear it. Before the words were fairly out of Bert's mouth she was speeding toward the theatre.

Bert picked up the letters carefully and put them in his pocket.

There was something about the handwriting that struck him as familiar. But it did not occur to him to think of that now; his mind was too busy with bewildering theories.

How had the soubrette got them, and what had she been doing with Marion's property?

Not a word had been breathed by either Marion or Miss Allyn about the missing parcel, so Bert was completely mystified by this astounding revelation.

The moment he reached the theatre he went into Mr. Temple's office, and as soon as the manager came in, he told him the whole occurrence.

"I knew they'd make trouble! I felt it in my bones," were Mr. Temple's first words. "But we must go at this thing cautiously, Bert; there must be no loop-holes in our method."

They talked for awhile, and then Bert went around to the stage entrance. It was almost time for the matinee, and he wanted to see Marion the moment she arrived.

Lou Leland and her friend were already in their dressing-room, and, as Bert passed the door, he could hear them whispering together.

But the "first call" had been made before Marion arrived, and as she was obliged to rush into her costume, Bert could not delay her.

"Do you know what I think, Marion?" asked Alma Allyn, softly, as she and the star were hurrying with their toilets.

"I think the doctor has kept out of sight purposely, for some reason. He does not intend us to see him until we meet on the stage, where we can neither show our sympathy nor ask any questions."

"I thought of that," was the low reply; "but if it is true, what we think, it looks significant, Alma; it looks as if we were in some way concerned in the matter."

"That is so," admitted Alma, with a shake of her head, "but it can't be me, so it must be you; but what have you done, Marion, to offend the doctor?"

"Oh, Alma, how can you!" whispered the young girl, sorrowfully. "I have done nothing, absolutely nothing, Alma."

She hurried down the stairs to the scene-room, passing Bert on the way, but there was no time for even a word; she heard her cue as she passed him.

The next minute she came face to face with Dr. Brookes, and, in spite of the fact that thousands of eyes were upon her, she could not repress a start at his altered appearance.

The doctor was calm and composed, and he was acting superbly, but his whole manner had changed—she could not only see, but feel it.

When he took her hand, his touch was cold and indifferent. When he spoke words of endearment, they seemed lacking in tenderness, and every glance of his eyes filled her with uneasiness.

What had she done?

The question rose to her lips as though some one had spoken it. She seemed to know intuitively that it was she who had caused his trouble.

When she left the stage after the first act, her heart was throbbing violently, and it was all that she could do to keep from crying.

"Oh, Alma! What does it mean?" she burst out as she reached the dressing-room. "He is changed, completely! Why, I hardly know him! He is as courteous and kind as ever, but there is something lacking! It is as if I had wronged him or grieved him, Alma."

"I noticed it at once," was Miss Allyn's puzzled answer, "but did you see how pleasant he was to Miss Maitland? Why, he warmed up in that scene with her in a wonderful manner! He has always been a little listless right there until this evening."

Miss Ellis came in before Marion could reply. She was greatly excited, and her brow was wrinkled with anger.

"Well, of all things! Miss Maitland is down in the scene-room, positively gushing over the doctor! You ought to see them, Marion! It is simply disgusting!"

Miss Allyn glanced at her friend, but the fair young girl said nothing. She was still dangerously near the verge of an attack of hysterics.

"Yes, she's just loading him with taffy," went on Miss Ellis; "she is just begging him to stay with us and not go back to New York, and I heard her tell him that it would break her heart to have him go! Really, I never saw anything so forward and so immodest!"

Miss Allyn shook her head in a puzzled manner.

"The doctor must be laboring under an attack of temporary insanity," she said, softly. "I can't understand it a little bit! It is extraordinary!"

"Hello, girls! Can I come in?" called Bert, as he stopped at the door. He was doing his best to get a few minutes' talk with Marion.

"Oh, Bert! The rioting broke out again to-day; did you know it?" cried Miss Ellis.

Bert set his teeth together with a snap as he answered:

"Yes, and it's liable to break out again at any minute," he said, viciously. "I'm on the war-path myself, and I'm just looking for trouble! Answer me a question, quick, Marion. Have you lost anything lately?"

"Oh, Bert! My letters!" cried the young girl, eagerly.

There was a sound in Lou Leland's dressing-room as if she had suddenly dropped something, then all was silent and Bert knew she was listening.

"There they are! Count them!" he said, just loud enough for Lou to hear. "If there's one of them missing, I want to know immediately!"

Marion glanced over her letters and counted them carefully. The orchestra stopped playing before she had finished.

"They are all here," she cried, delightedly, as she put them together. "Now tell me, quick, Bert! Where did you find them?"

There was a moment's silence, and some one at the foot of the stairs called loudly for Marion.

"I picked them up in the street," was Bert's very distinct answer. "Now, hurry, Marion! The stage is waiting!"

CHAPTER XII.

BERT DOES SOME THINKING.

Rioting had, indeed, broken out again, but as Bert's father was now safely out of town, he had lost interest entirely.

The trouble in the company was taking up his whole time now, and the atmosphere at the theatre was anything but pleasant.

The next day passed without any change in the attitude of Dr. Brookes.

There were only two days left of their St. Louis engagement, and Mr. Temple had already secured a leading man to join them in Chicago, and still Marion had not solved the mystery of the stolen letters.

"Bert knows who took them, I am sure of it," she said to Miss Allyn. "I can't understand why he will not tell. It isn't like him to keep me in suspense on such a matter."

"It couldn't be possible that the doctor had them," said Miss Allyn, desperately. "It sounds dreadful to say such a thing, but he has changed so, Marion! Sometimes, when he looks at you, I can't help being suspicious."

"Of what?" asked Marion, with a trace of indignation. "Why, Alma, I would will-

ingly let him read every one of those letters, only that, of course, it wouldn't be an honorable thing to do! No, indeed! That is not it! The doctor would scorn to so much as glance at any one's letters!"

"I know it as well as you do," was her companion's answer, "but I can't seem to help putting the two things together."

Marion had been dressing for the evening performance, and was at the door as Alma spoke.

"It will all be explained sometime, I suppose," she said, with a sigh; "but I do wish it would happen soon, so that the doctor would not leave us."

"Miss Maitland wishes so, too," was Miss Allyn's answer. "That girl is head over ears in love with him, Marion, and do you know, I think that her days with the company are numbered."

Marion turned the knob suddenly before she replied. As the door opened, she caught a glimpse of Miss Leland. She had been listening at the key-hole.

In an instant the young star's face was flushed with indignation, and she stood like a statue, watching the retreating figure of the soubrette as it vanished down the corridor.

Dr. Brookes stepped out of his room at that instant, and as Marion saw him, she beckoned for him to come to her.

"Did you see her?" she asked, in a cautious tone.

"I did, indeed! She was listening, Miss Marlowe. You opened the door just as I was about to speak to her."

It was the third time the doctor had called her "Miss Marlowe" in that icy voice, and, as Marion heard it, her lips trembled with emotion.

She closed the door and stepped into the hall. There was no one about, and the doctor had turned to leave her.

"Dr. Brookes, what is it?" she whispered, eagerly. "What have I done that you have changed so in your manner toward me?"

Reginald Brookes turned—he was white as death. As they stood facing each other, Marion held out her hand appealingly.

"You have been so cold—you call me 'Miss Marlowe!' What is it? What has happened? I implore you to tell me!"

The young man took her hand and held it in his own, and for a moment he seemed struggling with some strong emotion.

"Have I been rude or unkind, Marion? If I have, I beg that you will forgive me," he said, gently. "I have not intended to hurt you, little one! God knows I would cut off my right arm sooner than wound your feelings."

"Then why are you so changed, so cold to me?" she asked, quickly.

There was the sound of a light footstep near them, but neither heeded it.

"I cannot explain the change in my manner, Marion," he said, softly, "but believe me, there has been no change in my heart. I have been struggling with myself and, at last, I have conquered—that is all I can say and retain my honor!"

The steps retreated softly and Mabel Maitland closed her door behind her. She did not dare to play the eavesdropper so recklessly any longer.

"It's no use, Lou," she whispered, as soon as she was inside. "They are spooning out in the hall and he's as much in love as ever, and I had almost gotten him to promise to take me to supper to-night after the performance!"

"I was sure he was beginning to like you," was her companion's answer, "but, as like as not he was only noticing you for a purpose. He may just have been trying to make her jealous."

"But he can't propose to her now! We've fixed all that," said Mabel, quickly. "Unless that kid has queered us by telling of the letters."

"Even if he did, we are safe until the doctor speaks, and he won't say a word," said Lou, as she poured a drink of liquor from a flask that she took from her pocket. "Why, you know yourself, that he is the soul of honor."

"Well, I don't understand this silence," was her chum's answer. "It's like the rioting in the street, you don't know where it is going to break out next—nor what is to be the extent of the damage."

"There's one thing certain," said Lou, putting down her glass. "There's nothing to be made out of that kid, Bert Jackson! And to think he is really the adopted son of a rich father."

"Oh, I haven't forgotten it!" cried her room mate, quickly, "and I'll fix the *ingénue* yet to pay for her fibs! There'll be fun to-night when we get to the theatre."

"Well, we'd better start if we are going to get there," was the reply, as Lou glanced at the clock, and the next few minutes were devoted to hurried dressing.

Bert and Dr. Brookes were standing near the stage entrance when Miss Allyn and Marion arrived, but, although it was growing late, the two new members had not put in an appearance.

Marion's beautiful face was fairly radiant with joy. She had a bunch of roses in one hand and a letter in the other.

"What do you think, Mr. Ray is in town!"

she cried out, happily. "He will be at the theatre this evening, if possible!"

Dr. Brookes turned as white as death and did not reply, but Bert gave vent to an exclamation that was positively startling.

"By thunder! I've just thought of something! Quick, Marion, let me see that letter! I want to look at Archie Ray's hand-writing, if you have no objections!"

Marion handed him the letter with a puzzled look upon her face, and the next instant Bert was trembling with suppressed emotion.

"It's the very same! Oh, I believe I'm at the bottom of it!" he cried out, wildly, "come, Doc, come to the dressing-room; I've got something to say to you!"

Marion followed them up the stairs. She was pale with excitement.

Bert had certainly some good cause for his extraordinary actions.

"Oh, Alma! I do believe there is some treachery at the bottom of it all!" she murmured, as soon as she could relate the occurrence.

"I have thought so ever since Bert found the letters," was the anxious answer. "Oh, I think he did wrong not to tell us where he found them! No doubt he is trying to protect the guilty, but I am sure it is a case of mistaken honor on his part!"

"I'll try to be patient," said Marion, with tears upon her long lashes; "but this misunderstanding that has come up is killing me, Alma! It is doubly hard, because I do not deserve it!"

"Indeed, you do not, Marion!" cried a sympathetic voice, as Miss Ellis stepped into the dressing-room and closed the door carefully, "but don't fret another minute," she whispered, cautiously. "Why, the riots in the city are beginning to look positively tame compared with the one that has just been going on in the office!"

"What do you mean?" asked Alma and Marion, both at once.

Miss Ellis sat down on a theatrical trunk and burst out loughing.

"Why, the new soubrette, Miss Maitland, has been flirting with Mr. Temple again, and he gave her the benefit of the two weeks' notice. Now, if someone will only flirt with the other little snip with the whisky breath——"

"Which there's no danger of anyone doing!" broke in Miss Allyn.

"Hello, Marion! Come, quick! He's here!" called out Bert's voice, suddenly.

Marion darted from the dressing-room, with Miss Allyn following her, and as they reached the scene-room they saw Archie Ray and Dr. Brookes in earnest conversation.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOUBLE TREACHERY.

In the next five minutes the star of the company was put in possession of some startling information.

As fast as he could talk, Archie Ray told what had brought him to St. Louis. He had come in answer to the doctor's letter of congratulation on his engagement to Marion.

"It was the first I knew of it," he said, with a wistful glance at Marion, "and, of course, I couldn't come fast enough to seek an explanation."

Marion was completely mystified until the doctor stepped forward and handed her a letter. It was addressed to himself and in Mr. Ray's handwriting.

"I supposed it was genuine," he said, with a bright smile, "but, as I was asked in the letter not to mention it, even to you, I was put in a very embarrassing position."

"But why should you not mention it to me—if it were true?" asked Marion, who was still a trifle bewildered.

"That is the one thing that should have told me it was forged," was the disgusted answer. "I can't explain my stupidity when I read the letter."

Everyone present who heard him could have explained it readily, but there was no time now to tease the young lover.

"I shall ferret this out myself," said Marion, with sudden determination. "Please let me have the letter, doctor! I am going to find the miscreant who wrote it!"

She turned away with a queenly gesture. Her blood was on fire with righteous indignation.

"I'll tell you where I found those letters, now," said Bert, coming forward and lowering his voice, cautiously. "Miss Leland dropped them in the street and I picked them up! She must have stolen them from your trunk—and there you have the motive."

He pointed to the letter in Marion's hand.

"I see," said the young girl, slowly. "She wished to make trouble between the doctor and myself! Oh, how can anyone be so malicious and cruel!"

"I was so stupid that I didn't catch on until to-night," went on Bert, disgustedly; "and yet the minute I saw those letters scattered on the sidewalk, I knew I'd seen the handwriting somewhere, and very recently, too, and to-night I remembered that it was on one of the doctor's letters, the one that kicked up all this infernal trouble!"

"It shall be ended, and at once," said Marion, again. "I shall confront Miss Leland and demand an explanation!"

She turned as she spoke and hurried up the

stairs, never stopping until she reached the door of the new soubrette's dressing-room.

"Come!" said Miss Allyn, quickly. "Let's go with her and see it out. I could annihilate the little vixen for daring to make trouble for Marion!"

"Hold on a minute! She isn't in the theatre!" exclaimed Bert, suddenly, and at that moment the stage door opened and Miss Leland entered.

Marion had found the dressing-room vacant and returned to the scene-room just in time to come face to face with the girl who had injured her.

For just a moment both stood perfectly still, looking straight at each other; then the soubrette's lids fell, and her face was suffused with blushes of shame and confusion. Something in the great gray eyes, looking so scornfully into her own, made her suddenly shrink into insignificance.

The rest of Marion's friends were staring at her, but she did not think of that then. The rebuke upon the beautiful face of the star seemed burning through and through her.

She attempted to speak, but the words died upon her lips. It was a moment of torture—one that she would never be able to drive from her memory.

"Miss Leland," said Marion, finally, in her ringing voice, "have I ever harmed you in any way? Have I been other than kind to you since you came into this company?"

The soubrette did not answer—her lips seemed to have grown dumb, but the sweet tones of Marion's voice thrilled her in every fibre.

"Then why have you tried to injure me—to hurt me with my friends? Answer me, Miss Leland, why did you write that letter?"

The soubrette raised her eyes in a brazen attempt to deny the accusation, but her glance fell upon Bert's face and again her lids fell guiltily.

"It does not seem possible to me that you could do such a thing—you or any other woman," went on Marion, softly, "and you might have known that you would be found out, Miss Leland; but, perhaps you did not realize that both Mr. Ray and Dr. Brookes were men of honor."

The last words were said scathingly, and Miss Leland winced. As her eyes flashed a glance around, they suddenly lighted on the face of a stranger.

Archie Ray stepped forward where she could see his face distinctly.

"You are a disgrace to your sex, Miss Leland, if you wrote that letter!" he said, distinctly. "It is a sad pity, indeed, that you should ever have joined this company."

Miss Leland found her voice at last and lifted her head defiantly.

"Who says I had anything to do with that letter?" she asked, in trembling tones. "Just because I was trying to protect my room-mate by carrying those letters, you all think I am guilty of stealing them, don't you!"

"And so you are, Lou Leland!" called out a shrill voice, sharply.

Miss Maitland had come into the scene-room and now stepped forward, coolly.

"So you did take the letters and, what is more, you forged the hand-writing, too! I've got a witness right here who will corroborate my statements!"

Miss Leland's attempt to cast suspicion upon her companion had sent Miss Maitland into a fury of anger, which was more intense since Miss Leland had accused her, thinking she was out of hearing.

Lou turned around with a cry of horror.

The man who had written the forged letter was standing right behind her, looking her in the face with an exultant expression on his coarse features.

"Oh, she's a daisy, Lou is!" went on Miss Maitland, showing her vicious nature. "She swore to queer you with your friend, Dr. Brookes, but she's queered herself, and I'm glad of it! You just ought to have seen her when she read your letters, Miss Marlowe! Why, you are in luck that she didn't blackmail you when she had them in her possession!"

She was half-way up the stairs before she finished, and Lou and the newcomer were glaring at each other.

Before anyone had spoken a word, Mabel Maitland was back with her valise, and the next minute she had left the company forever.

As the door closed after the woman and her companion, Lou Leland at last found her voice and burst out, vehemently:

"It's a lie! I did not steal the letters! She did it herself! And he copied the hand-writing! I swear that he did it!"

Marion turned from her, coldly, and went straight to her dressing-room. She was shocked beyond expression at this display of treachery.

Miss Ellis did the dual *rôle*, her own and Miss Maitland's, and as Lou did not have to appear until the second act, there was an opportunity for Marion to calm herself before she saw her.

CHAPTER XIV

REPENTANCE

The moment the final curtain fell Marion rushed to her dressing-room. It had been a

hard evening, and she was worn out with excitement. Dr. Brookes had shown his happiness so plainly in every look and word that she almost pitied the noble fellow for loving so deeply.

On the other hand, Archie Ray had been strangely depressed. He had been silent and almost morose ever since the explanations.

It had begun to snow, and, as Marion and Miss Allyn reached the stage door, they found that the manager had carriages waiting.

"We will go together, Alma," whispered Marion, softly; "I really can't endure a *tête-à-tête* with any one to-night. I am too upset over Miss Leland's treachery.

"She'll go home in a carriage, I don't think," was Miss Allyn's answer, as she tucked Marion's arm under her own. "The tricky little minx has gone off in the snow alone. Oh, isn't it wonderful how some girls can be so foolishly wicked?"

Dr. Brookes had handed them into the carriage, and then both he and Archie Ray entered, and the four began at once to discuss the situation.

Suddenly the carriage pulled up with a terrific jerk, and the doctor put his head out of the window to see what was the matter.

"There's a mob on the corner," he said, after a glance. "They are railroad men, I guess, and they are blocking up the street. We'll have to turn back or wait until the arrival of the police."

"Oh, let us turn back, by all means," cried Marion, quickly. "It is dreadful to have to see all this fighting and quarreling; and, besides, I am sure it is a little dangerous."

The words had hardly passed her lips when a stone crashed into the carriage.

It fell in Marion's lap, but, fortunately, did no damage.

"Turn back at once, driver!" called the doctor, sharply.

Another stone whizzed by and struck the side of the carriage. It was evident that the rioters were aiming recklessly.

There was a plunge of the frightened horses and then a sharp, dangerous turn, then the glare from an electric light lit up a group of the strikers.

Marion leaned forward quickly and a cry passed her lips.

"Oh, doctor! There is Miss Leland right in the middle of that mob! Do look at her, quick! She is acting so strangely!"

There was another sharp order, and the carriage stood still. In one brief glance the young physician comprehended the whole situation.

"She has been drinking," he said, quickly, "and she is in an awful position! Shall I try to rescue her, Marion, in spite of all her wickedness?"

Without waiting to answer, Marion opened the door of the carriage. The next second she had sprung to the ground and was forcing her way to the sidewalk.

Right in the glare of the arc light stood Miss Leland, with her red hair flying. She had lost her hat and cape and was crying pitifully. A crowd of half-grown boys and men surrounded her, and were jeering her coarsely, but they stopped in an instant as they caught sight of Marion.

"Come!" said the young girl, sweetly, as she took Miss Leland by the arm. "This is no place for you, Miss Leland! Quick! Get into the carriage!"

Dr. Brookes was already on the sidewalk, and in an instant he had the soubrette's other arm and, between them, they lifted her bodily and placed her in the carriage.

Marion sprang in after her, and the doctor slammed the door. The next moment he was on the box with the driver, and the carriage was speeding away in the opposite direction.

Marion and Miss Allyn put Lou to bed when they reached the hotel, and then took turns in watching over her until she was thoroughly sober.

Marion Marlowe's beautiful eyes were looking into hers when the soubrette awoke at eleven o'clock in the morning.

For the first few seconds she could hardly believe her senses; then, for some unaccountable reason, she burst into a paroxysm of weeping.

"Do you mean this, Miss Marlowe?" she stammered, as soon as she could regain her voice, "do you mean that you are my friend and that you really forgive me?"

"I do, indeed," said Marion, earnestly. "And, oh, Miss Leland, I do hope you will stop drinking! It will ruin your life! It is already ruining it!"

"I know it," murmured the soubrette, "and I'll try to stop, Miss Marlowe; I will, indeed, if you will only help me!"

Marion bent and kissed the girl's flushed cheek.

"I will tell you the truth," Lou burst out, suddenly. "I will tell you every word about that letter, Miss Marlowe—even though I lose your respect and friendship entirely!"

"You will not do that if you tell me the truth," said Marion, soberly; "it is only untruths that I despise—lies, deceptions and treachery."

Lou sat up in bed and told her all, even to the fact that Mabel had taken her vulgar lover from her.

"Now, that is the truth," she said, with a

sigh. "Have you the grace in your heart to forgive me now, Miss Marlowe?"

Marion's cheeks were pale, but her answer was as firm as ever.

"I forgive you, Miss Leland, but oh, do try to be honest in future. Never again sully your soul with an act like that. Be a woman, Miss Leland. It is next to being an angel!"

"And I can stay in your company," whispered the girl, who was truly repentant.

Marion shook her head.

"I will do what I can," she said, softly, "but Mr. Temple is the manager. I shall not try to influence his good judgment. I shall tell him the truth and ask him to be merciful. This is all I can do in justice to my companions."

And Marion did ask Mr. Temple to be merciful in his judgment, but one look into her fair face decided the manager.

"She may be sincere and she may not," he said, very sadly. "It is my duty to protect you, and I shall do it as well as I can. You have had trials enough to bear, little girl!"

The rest of the time in St. Louis passed in peace and quiet; even the rioting ceased upon the evening of Lou's rescue.

Archie Ray left town, realizing that Marion was still mistress of her own heart, and Dr. Brookes decided to continue with the company. Miss Maitland's whereabouts were of no interest to anyone, but Marion never quite forgot her enemy, Lou Leland.

"All's well that ends well," murmured Miss Allyn, as they were leaving.

A gentle smile from Marion's sweet lips was the only answer.

THE END.

At the next city where the company played —Chicago— Marion had some of the strangest adventures she had yet been through. What these were, including the double disappearance of both herself and Mr. Temple, will be told in next week's MY QUEEN (No. 20). The story will be entitled, "Marion Marlowe in Chicago; or, Trapped by a Lunatic."

PATTERN COLUMN.

By special arrangements with the manufacturers we are enabled to supply the readers of MY QUEEN with the patterns of all garments described or illustrated in this column at TEN CENTS each. Address, "Pattern Column," MY QUEEN, 25 William Street, New York City.

In ordering patterns be sure to give size and number.

FASHION NOTES.

A novel and extremely stylish bodice for demi-toilette is composed of brocaded satin, with under sleeves and basque of chiffon, edged with chenille, the decolletage trimmed with tagged ends. Folds of chiffon and large revers of Renaissance lace complete the original model.

Any woman with a taste for French modes must have a little color in her handkerchief this season. The new importations come in pink and blue embroidery or stamping, including moss rose buds, pansies, violets, strawberries and countless other flowers and fruits, in prices ranging from fifty cents to five dollars each. Another handkerchief novelty has an all-linen center and a combination of Renaissance lace with valenciennes or embroidery.

No. 2364—LADY'S PLAIN STYLISH WRAPPER.

Figured flannel or cashmere is appropriate material for any wrapper and house garment. In this model figured red flannel was used. There is a short fitted lining underneath, Straps of the material are sewn in with the side seams and fastened at the center-front, to hold the fullness of the front in position. The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 44 inches bust measure. Size 36 requires 11 yards of 27-inch or 6 yards of 42-inch material.

No. 2365—BOY'S PLEATED DRESS.

This model is especially designed for little boys who are just between the white frock and the trouser ages, the time when the small boy still cries at his mother's knee and regards trousers as the sum total of human happiness. The front and back have a box-pleat on each side of the center, and the dress is shaped by side seams only. The standing collar is joined to the shield and fastens at the back, where it is buttoned to the neck of the dress under the sailor collar. The lower part of the shield is held in position by tapes tacked to it and tied about the child's waist. The design is adapted to piqué flannel, serge or cloth. The pattern is cut in sizes 1, 2 and 4 years. Size 2 years requires 2 3 4 yards of 27-inch or 1 3 4 yards of 42-inch material. As shown, 1 1 2 yards of 42-inch with 1 1 2 yards of contrasting material.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY

GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department is a special feature of this publication, and it will be appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers. It is conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, is well known. Readers of "MY QUEEN" need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and will never refuse her assistance or sympathy. As all letters are answered only through the columns of "MY QUEEN," it is unnecessary to enclose stamps. STREET & SMITH.

"I am only eigtheen and have no mother, so I write to you asking to please give me your best advice.

"There is a young man twenty-three years old, and he loves me so dearly that he would do anything for me, but I do not even love him a little bit. Would you advise me to marry him?

"But there is another whom I do love, but I cannot in any way find out if he loves me, although he kissed me good-by when he went away. How can I find out if he loves me? I love him with all my heart and when I see him I can hardly help but show it. HENRIETTA C. E."

We would not advise you to marry any one whom you do not love, no matter how much he cares for you. Mutual affection is the only feeling that justifies marriage, and an alliance formed upon any other basis will probably be unhappy and disappointing.

In regard to the other young man, we would advise you not to show affection for him unless he desires it. There are few worse things for a woman to do than bestow her favors where they are not appreciated. The only way by which you can determine whether he loves you is by his actions. If he watches over your health, your welfare and your happiness with jealous care, then you will have some ground for believing that he has some affection for you.

"I buy 'My Queen every week, and would not be without it. I enjoy the questions and advice you have so ably given, and I will appreciate it if you will kindly advise me, as I am very downhearted.

"I am twenty-three. For four years I have deeply loved a young man who as deeply loved me and to whom I was engaged. Three years ago he allowed himself to become estranged from me by a young man whom he called a friend, but he found out his error and deeply repented. He has a proud, passionate but tender disposition, and tried again and again to make it up, but I was so angry I would not even speak to him until this summer when I finally forgave him.

"He now continually puts himself in my way on the street acting very nice and friendly.

"I would gladly give him my company again, but he does not seem to have the courage to say anything to me, though I try to encourage him by being pleasant when I meet him. I find he is a trifle jealous of my gentleman friends. What do you think he means?

"I love him and want to get him back. How would you advise me to do it? Do you think there are any hopes of it? He is twenty-five and has never kept company with any young lady but me so far as I know. ILA DE PARLOA."

It seems to us that you are inclined to be overexacting. You must not expect a man to get down on his knees and beg forgiveness. You say that he has shown you that he repented, and tried frequently to "make up" the quarrel. He has certainly gone half way, and if you love him and want him back, why do you not let the matter drop right where it is? The next time you chance to meet him ask him to call upon you some certain evening and you will probably find that that is all that you need to do. Do not attempt to discuss the old matter, but, if you value his society, resolutely avoid all references to past misunderstandings.

"Will you please give me advice as you have a good many other young girls. I am sixteen years old and love a young man seventeen years old. The people all say we go together, but I know he goes with other girls sometimes On four occasions he had me out riding and on two occasions he kissed me, but he never mentioned the word love to me

"Am I to stop keeping his company or what am I to do? Please publish the answer in 'My Queen' as soon as possible.

"LILLIAN E. A."

It is by no means unnatural for a man to want to kiss an attractive and pretty girl, even if he is not in love with her. We see no reason why you should not continue this young man's acquaintance, if his society is congenial to you. We would advise you to be chary of your kisses, as privileges of this sort should be reserved for one's fiance or husband.

You are too young to be thinking seriously of love. Leave the great passion out of your thoughts for a few years and then you will be better able to judge of the value of the affection that may be offered you in return.

"I am a constant reader of your delightful weekly and would like to ask your advice. I am hard hit by a girl who seems indifferent to me, and I would like to know how she feels in regard to me.

"Once in a while, by some little action of hers I think that she is not entirely disinterested, and I would like very well to win her affection. I do not think of marrying, but I like a good time with a girl and I want to win her. I have not got girl on the brain though. T. T."

Our advice is that you leave the girls alone if you have no more manly motive in cultivating their affection than the one expressed in your letter.

The man who wants to "win" a girl, but who has no idea of marrying her, is a poor sort of an individual, in our estimation.

If we knew who this young lady was we would take pleasure in warning her as to your real character.

Never consider cultivating a woman's society to the exclusion of others who are of more benefit to her than yourself, and never try to win a woman's affection, unless you are anxious to show your appreciation of it by giving her in return all your love, all your devotion and all your honor.

"I am in despair and am wondering whether you can give me advice to make me feel different I learned to know a young man about a year ago and we kept up steady company for five months. During this time my sister always tried to talk me away from him At the end of these months both of us traveled away; he East and I North, but we kept our correspondence up by mail. Now that we have returned back to our city again we met several times, but sister always scolds me for going with him, and to keep up friendship and have no misunderstanding between sister and myself, he goes with another, and I know he still loves me, because he often writes, telephones and has even taken me to operas while he keeps company with the other one. How can I get him back all for myself and without quarreling with my sister He is an honest, bright young man, and is liked by every one that knows him. Thanking you a thousand times beforehand for your good advice, ESTELLA D."

We cannot see why your sister should interfere with your affairs any more than you with her. If you love this young man and he loves you with that true, devoted affection that makes life worth living, you will not allow one sister or a dozen to break up your friendship, providing there is nothing objectionable in the young man. If this is the case we would advise you to tell your sister plainly but calmly that you cannot allow her to interfere with your affairs, and then go ahead and enjoy the young man's society She may very possibly scold you and endeavor to make you uncomfortable, but if you show a determined spirit, her scoldings will cease as soon as she sees that they are of no avail

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"I have just received a copy of 'My Queen,' and I see so many letters of advice in it that I thought I would ask your opinion in regard to my boy.

"I have been married fourteen years and I have a boy thirteen years old who is at present causing me a great deal of trouble. In school he is called a tattletale, for he is always watching the other children and their work and then says to the teacher 'such a one has done this or that' I have threatened him with all kinds of punishment, and to-day he has repeated his tattling, and I have whipped him and put soap in his mouth as I promised His father never does anything towards correcting him, and never whips him, and I really do not know what to do to have him overcome the bad habit. The teacher as well as the children and their parents are getting down on him, and I feel he is too young to take from school. I tell his father that if he would punish him it might help My husband and I are very often angry over him, but it don't do any good. If I whip him in front of his father he interferes, and it always ends with words between us. Please advise me what to do for I have exhausted my brains trying to think, and it upsets me so I am no good for a long time.

"MRS. L. A. L."

You have our sincere sympathy in your perplexity. There is nothing so ruinous to the morals and habits of children as the disagreeing of parents over their bringing up. Your boy is not the only child who has been a tattler, and it is probable that some day he will get over the habit, but meanwhile you can only talk seriously and decidedly to both him and your husband and try to show them both that you are acting for the child's good, and because you wish him to be loved and respected instead of hated.

Bad manners in children reflect on no one more than upon their parents, and, in this case, as in many others, correction and discipline should begin with the father He should be taught his duty, not only to his child, but to the public at large, who are being annoyed by his son's bad habits.

There are comparatively few men and women in this world who are fit to be fathers and mothers, and it is apparent that your boy is not altogether to blame for his nature, as his father should not leave the entire disciplining of his boy to you.

"You have answered so many letters for girls and helped them out of their trouble that I thought I would send you one.

"I have been keeping steady company with a young man for the last six months. I love him very much and he said he loved me. Some time ago we had a falling out I would like to have his company again I think I can get him back again if I try Do you think that I should write to him and tell him that I am sorry for what I said? I am very lonesome without him. I have been reading 'My Queen,' and like it very much I wish that I was like Marion Marlowe, but I hope she had good luck in the end. M. K."

If you are really sorry for what you said, we would advise you, by all means, to write the young man and say so It is a very foolish pride that prevents one from acknowledging when they are in the wrong.

We are glad you enjoy reading "My Queen," and Marion is certainly a fine character. We are not surprised that you wish you were like her. No one can tell what Marion's luck will be in the end, but if character counts for anything, it is fair to suppose that your wish will come true.

"I have read the book entitled 'My Queen,' and find it very interesting. My favorite character is Marion. Now, Miss Shirley, for advice from you would say that I have been keeping company with a gentleman nearly a year. I am only nineteen years old and he two years younger He tells me that he will never marry unless he marries me. I have often tried to break up keeping company with him in many ways, but he will not have it. He has taken me to theaters and other places of amusement. He thinks that I am a 'jollier' and does not care to have me so, but prefers my being sensible. I like him very well, and but for his age would be willing to marry any time. Please advise me what I ought to do. ADDIE V. D"

We think that both you and this young man are entirely too young to think about marriage. Judging from your letter, you are not in love with him, and we would advise you to insist upon breaking up the habit of "keeping company" Go out frequently with other people and let the lad seek other companionship. You will be doing him a benefit and yourself, at least, no injury if you firmly pursue this course.

"There is a young man of whom I am extremely fond, but as I do not reside in the same city as he, of course I do not see a great deal of him, but every time I do see him I like him more and more. While I know he values my friendship very highly, I am not quite sure that he loves me as much as I would like him to He is a Catholic, while I am the reverse, which would not make the least difference to me, but possibly may to him, although he never mentions religion. Kindly advise me what to do Is a young girl foolish for showing a young man she likes him? ESTELLE B"

We fail to see why religion should interfere with love affairs, any more than politics. Affection does not travel in theological paths, and it is well that it does not. Since your lover has never mentioned the subject, you will have little trouble, we imagine, in agreeing to disagree.

We do not believe in a girl showing affection for a man unless it has been sought by him. You can readily and sensibly show people that you like them and value their friendship without putting your acquaintance on any more tender footing

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"Will you kindly answer me a few questions. I am a young man who is deeply in love with a girl, but don't know if she really loves me or not.

"One night I asked her if she loved me and she said 'yes,' but I know she does not mean it, for she has all kinds of fellows come and see her.

"Do you think she loves me or not? If not, which is the best way to win her?

"JACK WILLSON."

If you are as uncertain as you seem to be in regard to the young lady's affection, we are sure that we cannot decide whether she loves you or not.

Her having other friends does not make any difference, for, even if she did care for you, that would be no particular reason why she should deprive herself of all other acquaintances. A woman's affection is a hard thing to "win." You might show this girl such manly attention as you can and endeavor to make yourself necessary to her in some degree. Whether she will even then have any affection for you is a question; but, if you can make a place for yourself in her life, win her esteem and respect, you will have a little better chance than any one else to win her love.

"I am a girl of sixteen and have several beaux. I have exchanged photographs with two or three of them, but my mother has objected to it as she says that it is not right that these young fellows should be going around with my picture. Do you think I did anything wrong?

"CHARLOTTE F. H"

We do not think that girls of sixteen should have beaux You would do much better if you spent your time improving your mind, instead of thinking about young men. We do not believe in the interchange of photographs by young people. You may be very sorry two or three years from now to think that they have your portrait.

"I have been engaged to a young man for three years, but we decided that we did not love each other enough to venture upon the matrimonial sea, so we broke the engagement a month ago. He was very sensible and pleasant about it at the time, but has seemed to feel sore about it since, and yesterday I got a letter from him asking me to return the ring and other trinkets he had given me I would like to keep them because we were such good friends when he gave them to me Please let me know if I am obliged to return them. DOUBTFUL MAY."

We cannot understand this sort of action on the part of a former lover. It is so opposed to the broad kindness and big-heartedness that must be a part of affection. If you want to keep the trinkets, do so by all means. They were given to you, and are your property. The maker of a gift has no shadow of claim upon it after it has left his hands, and we have no patience with the type of individual who makes presents with "strings on them."

"I was engaged for a year and a half, but found that I did not love truly enough to marry and broke the engagement, telling my betrothed my reasons for doing so.

"He was very angry indeed and threatened to make all the trouble he could for me, claiming that I had deceived him. In fact, he left me in a passion and vowing to 'queer' me with every friend I had. Some of my friends say that it was because he loved me so much that he now hates

me, but I think now that he never loved me. Please let me have your opinion.

"LIZZIE V. B."

Real love never desires the injury of the one beloved. A man who loves deeply may in a moment of insane passion even murder the woman who has deceived him, but the very nature of deliberate revenge is contrary to love. Love will always desire the best good of the object of one's affections, even at the sacrifice of one's own desires.

This man had merely an animal passion for you; he desired to possess you for himself, he had no idea of the divinity of love, of self-repression for the benefit of another. The nature that is deepest will be worst hurt, but will also be most generous. We do not think that this man will be able to injure you much with those who really know you, and you must not allow his threats to interfere with your consciousness that you have done right.

"I am a young lady seventeen years old. I am in love with a young man who is a conductor on the trolley cars. My mother does not like him, as he is not strictly temperate, but he was never tipsy. He often takes me for rides on the car, but I have to steal out of my window after my mother is in bed. Last night the car was late, and it was just twelve o'clock when I got home. My mother met me at the window and was so mad that I am afraid to try that any more. Now, please tell me what I can do to see my lover and not offend my mother still more. B. J. S."

We are sure that you have not been a very careful reader of the correspondence department of "My Queen," if you think that Grace Shirley will ever suggest a way by which you can clandestinely meet a lover of whom your mother disapproves. My dear child, do you not know that your mother is your best friend, and that she knows, far better than you, what is best for your welfare? We are very sorry to learn that any young lady of your age should have so little self-respect as to do as you say you do! The time will come when you will regret such foolish practices. A man who will encourage you in deceiving your mother is not the man for you to put your confidence in. He will deceive you in the end, and, we are afraid, you will richly deserve your punishment.

"I have been reading your books, from one to six, and I think they are fine. I like to go out in the evenings, and sometimes a gentleman friend brings me home. Papa almost takes a fit. Do you think I am doing wrong? One of them I dearly love, and he likes me. I will look for your answer and advice in number seven of the books.

"F. M. K."

It is a pleasure to know that you enjoy "My Queen." Your father would be wise to take heroic measures rather than a "fit" when his daughter disobeys him. Do you realize, my dear, that your father and mother are your best friends, and that their judgment is far superior to yours? This is a lesson that some young girls find hard to learn, but, oh! how bitterly many of them regret not having learned it earlier!

We could not print your letter in No. 7 of the weekly, as the edition was already printed when the letter came. It is absolutely necessary that these numbers should go to press some time before the date of issue in order to allow time for the printing, binding and mailing of such a large edition as "My Queen" requires. It would probably astonish most of our readers if they could look "behind the scenes" of the publication office when the forms of "My Queen" were on the press, or get a glimpse of the bindery when the first invoice of printed copies reached the binders' hands.

"I am nineteen years old and am in school. Attentions are being paid to me by a nice gentleman of my own age. We are together a great deal. Saturday evenings we go to a club and we see each other every day at school as we are in the same class, and we quite often walk up street together in the evening. He is very kind to me, takes me to lectures, concerts and so on. Please tell me if we are together too much. BESSIE."

You have written us a very sensible letter, Bessie, and we are glad that you consider matters from so reasonable a standpoint. Both you and your friend are pretty young to think of "paying attention." If the acquaintance is upon a purely friendly basis, we do not think that it will be a detriment to either of you. Do not allow it to interfere with your studies or with your friend's preparation for the battle of life. Perhaps it would be just as well if you dispensed with the walks "up street" in the evening. If you see the young man every day, any way, and go out occasionally in the evening to some interesting entertainment, that would probably be as much of each other's society as it would be well for you to have for the present

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"I am a young lady eighteen years old, and have been in love with a young man. It seems to me as though he does not love me as deeply as I do him. The reason I love him is because he is so kind to his mother, and then he is a good young man. He seems to be afraid of my mother. She does not care for him very much. Will you kindly advise me what to do to win him?"

"H. P. N."

You have certainly good reasons for your high opinion of this young man, but we would advise you not to allow your esteem to influence your affections, especially since you are doubtful whether he cares for you. Why do you not ask your mother her reason for disliking him? He probably realizes that she does not care for him and this causes him to be constrained when in her presence, but it is possible that you are mistaken in considering this as fear. We would not advise you to try to "win" any man who does not care for you. Save your affection for those who desire and value it.

"I have a bicycle, and I often go out for a ride, and one of my gentleman friends accompanies me home, but my mother and father do not like it very well. I am a very respectable girl in every way, and am seventeen years old. I am desperately in love with a young man who is very attentive and kind to me. He has never said that he loves me nor can I prove by his looks or actions that he does. Is there any way that I can prove whether his love is true to me. I was reading in a book called 'Morals and Good Manners,' and it said no young man would want to put his arm around a lady. If he did he would not be a respectable gentleman, and if she let him she would not be a lady. Now, Miss Shirley, what do you really think about this? LOUISE S."

There is nothing objectionable in riding the bicycle in company with a gentleman if he is a proper companion for you, and if you return home at a reasonable hour. If your parents object to your escort, it is probably because they do not think him a fit associate for you, and we would advise you to be guided by their judgment. It is doubtful whether any girl of seventeen knows what it means to be "desperately in love." There is no way in which a woman can prove a man's love except by his actions. If this man's actions do not denote affection, we would advise you to consider that you possess no attraction for him, and to endeavor to cease thinking of him in an affectionate manner. Save your love for the man who really values it. We cannot advise you to allow the boys to hug you indiscriminately if you wish to retain their esteem. Embraces should be reserved for one's fiance or husband. No girl who values herself will be careless in matters of this sort.

"I have read six numbers of 'My Queen' and I can say I enjoy them very much. I wish to compliment you on your literary ability, although I think you are too hard on actors and the stage. Why do you write as if everything about the stage is bad?

"Although I go with a crowd of boys and girls who are about seventeen years old I am only fifteen. Those in my grade at school are all seventeen or over. I am in love with a girl of seventeen, and I love her better than any one else and she tells me the same, and I am sure she means it. We love each other so well we feel we could never part, but we know better than to get married until I have finished my education and settled in some business. We have gone together for about eighteen months. We love to kiss each other very well. Is it not all right for us to kiss frequently, as we are each sure the other likes to? Don't think that we are so 'gone' that we don't pay attention to our studies, etc.

"Thanking you in advance for your answer to my question, which I hope to see in the question department of 'My Queen,' I am, D. D. D."

We are glad that you enjoy reading "My Queen" and have no doubt that the future issues will interest you even more. There are both good and bad people on the stage, as in every other walk of life, and the author pictures life as it exists, not as she would like it to be. Both your little sweetheart and yourself are too young to think of loving, or to be indulging in frequent kisses. Leave all such matters resolutely alone until you have finished your school days and have become established in business. You will enjoy women's society all the more then, if you do not cultivate it overmuch now. Do not even think of marriage until you are many years older.

"I am twenty years old and am very much in love with a man of twenty-five, who returns my affection He makes a fair salary—enough to keep us comfortably if we marry My parents object to him because he is not wealthy, as they say I ought to marry money, and they have picked out a rich man who is nearly twenty years older whom they want me to make myself agreeable to in hopes that he will care for me The idea is repulsive to me, and I am at a loss how to act in the matter. Won't you please advise me?

"MABEL T. O. C."

Your letter seems very straightforward, and we would say that if you are convinced of the sincerity of this young man's affection there is only one thing for you to do and that is to marry him Do not do anything that is repulsive to your finer instincts or degrading to your womanhood.

"Please decide a question for me I am invited to a dance at a social club of which my betrothed is not a member He says it would be wrong for me to go when he cannot be there, too, but I can't see any harm in it. He always escorts me everywhere and I shall certainly miss him, but I would like to go to this dance very much. Do you think I would be doing wrong to go?

"FANNIE P."

Your betrothed ought to be glad to have you go where you can find enjoyment, and his misfortune should not be made a bar to your pleasure. He is probably a little jealous We would suggest that you explain to him your reasons for wanting to attend this dance, and tell him as you have told us that you will miss his not being there.

He would probably go to a "stag" supper if he got an invitation, and if you will put the matter to him in this way he will probably see the thing in the right light. We have no patience with the dog-in-the-manger people who refuse pleasure

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to others simply because they cannot share it themselves.

"I am in trouble and know of no one to turn to but you. There are two young men who want me to marry them. I love one and like the other. My parents want me to marry the one I like. They do not want me to marry the one I love because he does not earn as much as the other. Will you please advise me what to do, for I can't judge for myself. I would like to please my parents, but I would also like to marry the one I love. SARAH M."

Under no circumstances marry a man you do not love when you are confident that you do love another. You would be unhappy and would make him unhappy, no matter how much you might "like" him, and the fact that he was possessed of a better income than the man you really love would not make matters any more agreeable.

Stick to the one you really love, and if his income is not large enough for you to marry on, wait until it is, and, meanwhile, help him along on the road to success by encouraging him to strive to win not only a comfortable income but yourself as well.

"I am eighteen years old and have a lover who is nearly forty-nine. I love him dearly and he is very anxious for me to marry him. He is very congenial, quite wealthy and has one child. Do you think I would be happy, and what would you advise me to do? MARY C. G."

We advise you to think this matter over very seriously. When your lover is an old man of seventy you will be only thirty-nine, or at the age when many women are most attractive. You will have to decide for yourself whether you love him enough to be sure that you will be faithful to your promise under these circumstances. The best advice that we can give you is to postpone your marriage for a year or two. If you are then still quite sure that you are in love with this man and that you will remain true to him, under all circumstances, then you may venture to become his wife.

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